The Hudson Review

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WYNDHAM LEWIS' *The Human Age* has recently been published in England by Methuen.

Dublin's Joyce, a new book by HUGH KENNER, will be published this Spring by the Indiana University Press.

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PETER H. LEE

Epigrams from the Korean

THESE SHORT POEMS ARE *examples of the* Sijo *form ("Epigram" is perhaps the closest English equivalent) which came into being towards the beginning of the 14th century. The origin of this poetic genre is not yet fully known, but the earliest author to whom extant* Sijos *are attributed is U T'ak (1262-1342). The norm consists of a 3-line stanza, with 14-16 syllables in a line; the total number of syllables varies from 42 to 45. Internally this triplet is again divided into three sections: beginning, middle, and final. There are, too, shorter and longer* Sijos, *the number of variations amounting to four. In translation, I have used a 6-line stanza for technical convenience.*

The Sijo *was an art for the many, and every educated man and woman tried and used this form for almost any purpose. Every topic, every mood, every style is possible. It is generally lyrical and light, but can be satiric, didactic, or philosophical. A writer writing the* Sijo *was not only familiar with its tradition and its concentrated art, but also was so deeply versed in it that he did not have to struggle to conform to its strict rules. In consequence many* Sijos *were composed extempore, ordinarily to be sung to lute accompaniments dating from the early part of the 18th century; but the marvel is that they still show the marks of tradition and discipline, of grace and harmony. Thus to the Yi dynasty writers in Korea the* Sijo *was an art in which words and music formed a single unit. A great body of the* Sijo *was gathered in anthologies during the 18th and the 19th centuries. The form is still alive today.*

The texts of the poems are recorded in the following anthologies:

Ch'onggu yong'on *(The Eternal Language of Green Mounds) 1727.*
Haedong kayo *(Songs of Korea) 1773.*
Kogum kagok *(Ancient and Modern Ballads)* c. *1725-1776.*
Namhum t'aep 'yong ga *(Songs of Peace)* c. *1801-1863.*
Kagok wollyu *(Source Book of Ballads) 1875.*

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Haedong p'ung 'a *(Elegant Things of Korea)?*
Kagok son *(Anthology of Korean Verse) 1913.*
Sijo yusu *(Thematic Catalogue of Epigrams) 1928, and others.*

The romanization of Korean names follows the McCune-Reischauer system.

SIJOS OF THE KORYO DYNASTY (918-1392)

East winds that melt the mountain snow,
Come and go, without words.
Blow over my head, young breeze,
Even for a moment, blow.
I would melt my grizzled hair,
Growing fast under the ear.

U T'ak, 1262-1342

Do not, o do not go, eastern egret,
Among the crows tearing and cawing.
Angry crows will no doubt hate you,
Jealous of your white feather;
Stain not your innocent self,
Cleansed, washed in the blue wave.

Mother of Chong Mong-ju, 1337-1392

I visit Kaesong on horseback,
The capital for five centuries.
Waters and grasses are ever the same;
But could we list our heroes' names?
Oh, golden age, it is then a dream
That once we sang praises of peace?

Kilchae, 1353-1419

SIJOS OF THE YI DYNASTY (1392-1910)

Wintry winds punish the dead boughs, the
Moon hangs high, cold, amid the snow.
On such a night, I stand on the fortress,
With an enormous sword in hand.
Alas, nothing stands on my way; only
My tough voice shakes the land.

Kim Chong-so, ?-1453

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Were you to ask me what I would be,
In the world that is beyond this,
I would be a pine, tough, tall,
On the highest peak of Mt. Pongnae,
And be green, alone, green,
When snow stuffs heaven and earth.

Song Sam-mun, 1418-1456

Night comes to the autumn river,
Waters sleep.
The fishes, even, slumber;
In vain I drop a line.
Cold moonlight on board,
Return, my empty ship, return.

Yi Chong, 1454-?

Stay:
Will you go? Must you go?
Are you going, weary, disgusted?
Or were you advised, moved?
Speak, why you are leaving,
Afflicted, still with longing eyes.

King Songjong, r. 1470-1494

My mind is foolish,
And all that I do seems vain.
Who would come to the deep mountain,
With its thick clouds, fold upon fold?
I look to see whether you came by chance,
Whenever the fallen leaves rustle in the wind.

So Kyong-dok, 1489-1546

Wearing cotton clothes in the coldest winter,
Wet with rain and snow in the wild,
I have not had the sun,
Hidden by the clouds, among these caves.
But, yet, to see the setting sun
Brings out my longing for its light.

Cho Sik, 1501-1572

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I discuss with my heart
Whether to retire from the royal court.
My heart scorns the intent:
"How could you leave the Lord behind?"
"Heart, stay here, serve him;
My body, old, has to go."

Song Sun, fl. 1519

However high a mountain may be,
It still is under the sky.
Climb, climb again, and more, who says
You will not gain its summit?
People complain that it is too high,
With no trial, no attempt, no will.

Yang Sa-on, 1517-?

Even a foolish fellow can know and act.
Is it not easy, learning the Way?
Even a sage cannot know all and act.
Is it not difficult, learning the Way?
While I study and work, easy or difficult,
I do not see old age creeping on me.

Yi Hwang, 1501-1576

Only I and the seagull know
The thirty-six peaks of the Mt. Ch'ongnyang.
Seagulls might report elysium is here;
Even more untrustworthy are peach-blossoms.
O blossoms, do not fall, do not float down
To tell the fisherman of this sunny site.

Idem.

Do not boast of your speed, do not,
O blue-green stream running by the hills.
Once you have reached the wide ocean,
You turn no more; can you?
Why not stay here, then, and rest,
When moonlight stuffs the empty hills?

Whang Chin-i, fl. 1506-1544

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Mountains are the same as yesterdays,
But waters change, always, turning.
Could the waters stand still, of yester-years,
When flowing, floating, night and day?
Heroes are like the flowing waters;
Once they are gone, they never return.

Idem.

While blue mountains express my desire,
Green waters reflect the love of Love.
Could the mountains change, I ask,
Even if the waters pass, flowing?
Perhaps the waters cannot forget me;
They part in tears, regretting, running.

Idem.

I offer you a bundle of parsley,
Fresh, clean.
A bundle of parsley just to you,
No one else, God forbid, just you.
Maybe not too delicious, my Dear,
But try again; once more test and taste.

Yang Hi-ch'un, fl. 1538

I would draw her face with blood,
That lies stagnant in my heart.
And on the plain wall of my room,
I would hang it up and gaze.
Who has made the word, "Farewell"?
Who causes me to love, and wither to death?

Sin Hum, 1530-1592

A rain came overnight;
Pomegranates are in full bloom.
Having rolled up a crystal screen
By the square lotus-pond,
Can I unravel this deep troubled self—
Ruled by whom? Who knows?

Idem.

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On the garrison tower,
In the moonlit Hansan isle,
A great sword beside me,
I sit alone, sunk in sorrow.
Listen, a reed-leaf whistle in the dark—
It pierces my entrails; ay, they shake.

Yi Sun-sin, 1545-1598

On the hill thickly decked with grasses,
Are you sleeping, or lying at rest?
Only bones are here, weathered and silent,
Your once beautiful face, where is it,
My darling, where did it go? Alas,
To whom should I offer this cup?

Im Chae, 1549-1587

Boy, fetch your open basket,
The sun is setting.
The ferns which grew last night
Are decayed and old, I fear.
What is the poor man's daily food,
But the fern, guileless and pure?

Cho Chon-song, 1551-1625

Boy, put on a sedge-coat, bamboo-hat.
It rains at the eastern torrent.
With a long rod without hook,
Let's go angling in the rain.
Quiet there, fish, don't be startled!
I came here, elated, in high spirits.

Idem.

Boy, lead a cow to the northern village.
Let's taste wine newly brewed.
Having drained to the lees, I shall return home,
Riding on the cow under the moon.
Hurrah, I am a Fu Hsi tonight,
The ancient glories are at my finger tips.

Idem.

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The moon hung in the sky, bright, full.
Since the dawn,
It has met the wind and frost.
Alas, it may soon fall, soon.
But no, wait, I say; and shine on
The golden goblet of a drunken guest.

Yi Tok-hyong, 1561-1613

Scared by the wind and storm,
A simple boatman bought a horse.
But he found the winding path
More tortuous than a heavy sea.
"Henceforth, no ship, no horse,
I will, I will follow the plough."

Chang Man, 1566-1629

Is it a cuckoo that cries?
Is it the willow that is blue?
Several roofs in a far fishing village,
Swim in the dusk, magnificent.
Boy, fetch an old net!
Fishes are climbing against the stream.

Yun Son-do, 1587-1666

Count the friends: how many have I?
Water and stone, pine and bamboo—
The rising moon on the east mountain,
Welcome, it too is my friend.
What good is there, I say,
To have more friends than five?

Idem.

They say clouds are fine; I mean the color.
But, alas, they often darken.
They say winds are clear; I mean the sound.
But, alas, they often cease to blow.
It is only the water, then,
That is perpetual and good.

Idem.

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Do not draw back your sleeves and go,
My own, I beg you with tears.
Over the long dike green with grass,
Lo, the setting-sun!
You will regret it when lighting the lamp,
By the tavern window, sleepless, alone.

Yi Myong-han, 1595-1645

Mountains are natural, natural,
Waters, too, natural, natural.
Between the natural mountains, waters,
I myself am natural, natural.
This body that grew naturally,
Will no doubt naturally age.

Song Si-yol, 1601-?

Who says I am old?
Is an old man this way?
Heart welcomes sweet flowers,
Laughter floats over fragrant cups:
But what could I do, I say,
With frosty hair in the fall-breeze?

Kim Chong-gu, ?

The eastern window dawns.
The lark sings; day breaks.
Cowherd, little servant,
Have you not yet risen, not yet?
When would you till the whole field,
Deep-furrowed, running over the hill?

Nam Ku-man, 1629-1711

The sun has set in the Yalu bank.
Far away in the distant haze,
How could you go, unguided,
A thousand miles into the Yen state?
But return soon, my Lord, return,
Where grasses are green, green in the spring.

Chang Hyon, fl. 1637

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Do not ridicule the small black birds,
O roc, do not.
You and the little bird both fly
A thousand miles high in the sky.
The two of you are birds;
So now, what difference is there?

Yi T'aek, fl. 1676

A boy stopped outside of my window,
Told me it was the New Year.
So I look out my eastern window—
The sun rises as of old, unchanged.
Look, boy, it is the same old sun;
Don't bother me now, come some other time.

Chu I-sik, 1675-1720

Having dozed amid the pines,
I awake, sleepy from drink.
The setting sun is over the river bank,
And look, seagulls fly in and out.
Yes, perhaps only I know
The beauties of these hills and streams.

Kim Sam-hyon, fl. 1675-1700

I have tried both pen and sword.
I am not finished; what did I attain?
Truly, I have spent fifty long springs,
Spent these years, dull and dry.
Forgo them all, I say. Is there
Any mountain that would deceive me?

Kim Ch'on-t'aek, c. 1720

The Milky Way climbs higher, and
Wild geese are cackling overhead.
In the frost that fell last night,
The hair below my ear looked grey.
A feeble and a grizzled look in the glass—
Who is that? Alas! Is that I?

Yi Chong-bo, fl. 1721-1741

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Having given my clothes to a boy,
To have him pawn them at the tavern,
And looking up to heaven,
I question the moon.
Who is Li Po, that ancient drunkard,
What is he compared with me?

Idem.

After the rain in the rivers and lakes,
Water and sky are of one color.
Having loaded a boat with wine,
I wet my line, follow the water.
Who is welcoming me amid the reeds—
Are they not the seagulls, calling?

Kim U-gyu, c. 1740

Wild geese have passed overhead;
Frost has settled several times.
Long, long is the autumn night;
The melancholy of the traveler is intense.
Only the moonlit garden is there,
My home, my realm, wistful and tender.

Cho Myong-ri, fl. 1777

O cold attitude, jewel form,
Your splendid self amid the snow.
You bring a sweet-scent, affluent,
Invite the marble moon at dusk.
Your elegance, can it be matched?
Pure, noble, o plum-blossoms.

An Min-yong, c. 1870

Were you to become I, and I you,
Born in each other's world,
You would have a hard time of it
And suffer a heartbreak as I have.
You would then know when taught in turn,
How I have grieved all my life.

Anonymous

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At the wind that blew last night,
Peach-blossoms fell, scattered in the garden.
A boy came out with a broom,
Intending to sweep them away.
No, do not sweep them away, no, no.
Are fallen flowers not flowers?

Anonymous

A horse neighs, wants to gallop:
My love clings to me, begs me to stay.
The moving sun has crossed the hill.
I have one thousand miles to go.
Do not stop me, love, do not,
Stop instead the sun that sinks.

Anonymous

The faint moon in a heavy frost,
A solitary wildgoose flies cackling.
Love, I fancied it brought me news.
Was it a letter from my love, indeed?
No, I hear only the bird,
Amid the clouds, incredibly far.

Anonymous

In the valley where the stream murmurs,
Having built a grass hut by the rock,
I till the field under the moon,
Among the vast clouds I lie.
Heaven and earth advise me
To age together with them; what now?

Anonymous

I have lived anxious and hurt.
Enough, enough, I would rather die,
Become the spirit of the cuckoo,
When the moon stuffs the empty hills,
And would sing with bitter tears,
Sing to him my forbidden hopes.

Anonymous

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What was love in fact, what was it?
Was it round, was it square?
Was it long, was it short?
More than several steps, several feet?
It seems not a too long thing;
But somehow I know not where it ends.

Anonymous

Alas, they deceived me—
The autumn moon and the spring breeze.
Since they came around in every season,
I believed they were sincere and sure.
But they only left me greying hair,
And followed the boys and went away.

Anonymous

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LOUIS SIMPSON

Andromeda

The People in the Play:

ANDROMEDA	*a princess of Ethopia*
PERSEUS	*a hero*
PHINEUS	*a friend of Andromeda*
PYRAMIS	*a friend of Perseus*
ISMENE	*Andromeda's cousin*

The Scene: Ethiopia, the sea shore, near a great rock

SCENE ONE

(PERSEUS, PYRAMIS)

PERSEUS You still appear astonished, Pyramis.
PYRAMIS To see you here so suddenly, like this,
After so many years! We thought you dead.
PERSEUS If I were killed as often as they said
I'd be immortal.
PYRAMIS Perseus, we heard
You were in India— and then no word
But rumors of great battles.
PERSEUS Yes, I've seen
Elephants butchered, and I've often been
Up to my neck in mud.
PYRAMIS Well, Perseus,
You thrive on it.
PERSEUS And are you envious?
How would you like to patch your rags with straw,
Sleep in the snow and eat your rations raw?
You'd miss your wife, your dinner and your wine.
Think of it—nothing but a concubine
Or two to warm you.
PYRAMIS Amen! It sounds fine.
What were the women like?

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PERSEUS They were—so so.
Voluptuous. No doubt you'd rather know
About the geography. There are smooth plains . . .
PYRAMIS Voluptuous?
PERSEUS With magnificent mountains
In the North.
PYRAMIS Perseus . . .
PERSEUS What?
PYRAMIS Why are you here?
In Ethiopia?
PERSEUS Why am I here?
To see my friends, of course. What do you mean?
PYRAMIS God knows we're glad to see you, and you've been
Absent too long. Your friends are happy, yet
Perseus, can you possibly forget
You also have a dangerous enemy . . .
PERSEUS Andromeda. Does she still think of me?
PYRAMIS She thinks of you, indeed! She hates you, Prince!
Her mind has been consumed with hatred since
You left her. You recall the oath she swore,
That if you ever set foot on this shore
Again, she would destroy you. When your fame
Reached Ethiopia, she cursed your name.
It's true that with the passing of the years
She stopped her accusations, dried her tears,
But I distrust her silence, Perseus.
She's proud and unforgiving, dangerous.
PERSEUS Pyramis, surely you exaggerate.
What reason can the Princess have to hate
The man who, after all, once saved her life?
PYRAMIS And then refused to take her as your wife!
She is a woman—that is your offense.
PERSEUS I never asked her for a recompense.
I pitied her.
PYRAMIS She loved you. Recollect
How proud she is—and you chose to reject
Her freely offered love.
PERSEUS I did not ask
Her love. What I did for her was a task
Like others. Since that time I have done more

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To better purpose. And indeed, before
I helped Andromeda I had some fame.
If men now speak of me and spread my name
And credit me with exploits, false and true,
It is because when there were things to do
I simply did them, and I never stayed
To be congratulated or repaid
Or held in women's arms. Pyramis, no . . .
The hero's secret is to act and go
And not wear out his laurels.

PYRAMIS Yet I fear
The Princess, and her friends.

PERSEUS I do not care
For her resentment. Once upon a time
I saved Andromeda—was this a crime?

PYRAMIS No one, not even she, could think it so,
And we are conscious of the debt we owe
To you, for changing our barbaric ways.
Yes, thanks to you, we have seen better days,
And now from Egypt to the Red Sea shore
Such sacrifices are allowed no more,
As when, misguided by an evil priest,
We sacrificed Andromeda to the beast
That came out of the sea—because we'd done
Something, he said, to offend Poseidon,
And she must pay for it. The blow you gave
The monster with your sword, did more than save
Andromeda—it taught us not to bow
To priests and oracles.

PERSEUS Yet even now
You worship the old gods and keep a brood
Of priests who never did you any good.

PYRAMIS These are strange words! Because we were deceived
And led astray, must all we have believed
Be quite abandoned?

PERSEUS Yes, and priestcraft too
And all who profit from it.

PYRAMIS Even you,
The day you saved Andromeda, you wore
A magic helmet, did you not? And bore

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The dazzling curved sword that Hermes lent,
Athena's shield . . .

PERSEUS The only instrument
I carried was my brains and my good arm.
But men are superstitious, and some charm
Of magic strikes their fancy more than skill.
But you may be religious, if you will.
Knowledge increases and the times will change,
And just as monsters now no longer range
The coasts, and men no longer kill their sons
And daughters for these priest-Poseidons,
So they will cast off superstition too.

PYRAMIS It may be very practical for you
To think like this. We common men must hold
To what we know.

PERSEUS Or what you have been told.
The world is changing. My companions
And I have fought with tyrants and with dragons.
Yes, Heracles and I and Theseus
Have made the world no longer dangerous.
We've driven back the tigers to their caves
And helped the dying giants to their graves.
With our own strength we did it, not the gods'.
The hero labors while Olympus nods.
These tasks are nearly done. In future days
We'll kill gods too, and earn the final praise.
But while we wait till men have realized
How foolish were the concepts that they prized,
Theseus and Heracles and I
Can find no worthy task to occupy
Our energies. So, Pyramis, I'm here
To see my friends, and you, whom I hold dear,
While there is time.

PYRAMIS And we are overjoyed
To see you. But, once more, you should avoid . . .
Too late . . . for here she is.

PERSEUS Andromeda!

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SCENE TWO

(PERSEUS, PYRAMIS, ANDROMEDA, PHINEUS)

ANDROMEDA They did not lie. You dare to show your face,
Perseus—to confront me in this place!

PERSEUS Andromeda, I see you're still the same,
Full of your grievances and quick to blame.
Of what imagined wrongs will you accuse
Me now? I've only come because I choose
To see my friends.

ANDROMEDA Perseus, I am sure
Your conscience is not quite so clear and pure
As you pretend. No, Perseus—you and I
Know the whole truth, and why I blame you.

PERSEUS Why?

ANDROMEDA Perseus, many days and nights have passed
Since, a mere girl, I looked upon you last
And pleaded for your love. You left me then
The fool of Ethiopia, and men
Would point at me and say, Look, there she goes,
And Perseus could have her, if he chose!

PERSEUS Come Pyramis. I am not here to be
Railed at by a woman.

ANDROMEDA Listen to me!
I've passed these many nights and days alone.
You have the Gorgon touch, that turns to stone.
I waited for you many nights and days,
At first I shared your dangers and your praise,
And then from strangers I began to learn
That you had no intention to return,
And time had passed, and who would have me then?
They thought that I was yours, and since most men
Are cowards, who would take me? No, the price
Seemed high. And since I'd been a sacrifice
They said I was untouchable. And some
Said I had been befouled . . .

PERSEUS Pyramis, come!

ANDROMEDA Yes, evil and unholy, so they said!
I was a ghost, returning from the dead.

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They feared my eyes, in which they seemed to see
A climbing monster and a burning sea.

PERSEUS There's something of the monster in your glare . . .

ANDROMEDA After that day no common man would dare
To marry me. You did not. In your phrase,
You did not choose to. And, these nights and days,
I have been left alone, as though betrothed
To your loud reputation, that I loathed.
What, do you think that you can change a life
And not accept it? I have been your wife
In heaven's eyes . . .

PHINEUS Princess, I implore . . .
This is beneath you!

ANDROMEDA Perseus, one word more!
I've been a sacrifice, not for a day,
But every hour since you went away.
And now again with insolence you dare
To show yourself . . .

PERSEUS Andromeda, I fear
None of your threats. We've nothing to discuss.

(Exit Perseus, Pyramis)

ANDROMEDA Give me your arm. Support me, Phineus!
You saw him—just as on the day he went,
Still selfish, cruel and indifferent.

PHINEUS Princess, you must not . . .

ANDROMEDA Phineus, you heard
The casual contempt in every word.
Those were his gestures—eyes, gray with disdain . . .
Too proud to quarrel with me or explain.
No, he will never change—but I have changed,
Though, unlike Perseus, I have not ranged
As far as India! His icy stare,
His massive arms, the color of his hair,
No longer touch my heart.

PHINEUS I do not know.

ANDROMEDA What do you mean?

PHINEUS When you describe him so
I think, perhaps . . .

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ANDROMEDA That I still love him? No.
PHINEUS Remember, Princess, how it was before
Perseus ever came—that then you swore
To marry me, and yet when Perseus came . . .
ANDROMEDA I fell in love with him. Was I to blame?
I was abandoned then by everyone . . .
My father . . . you . . .
PHINEUS What could I have done?
ANDROMEDA What Perseus did.
PHINEUS But Perseus was armed
And helped by heaven. Had I had the charmed
Sandals and sword, I could have done the same.
Princess, I know it—in your heart you blame
And hate me for a coward.
ANDROMEDA I do not.
You are my friend, you know my every thought.
But how can I forget the day that you
Left me to die?
PHINEUS What else could I do!
ANDROMEDA Do not remind me of my broken promise
And I will not recall your cowardice,
If cowardice it was. And if you fear
That I may once more find the hero dear,
It is unworthy of you, and of me.
What, Phineus, will you always be
Suspicious?
PHINEUS Andromeda, you know my love.
ANDROMEDA Then cancel out the past and rise above
Your doubts. What has this Perseus ever done
That you could not? And with his weapons gone
He's less than you.
PHINEUS Perhaps.
ANDROMEDA Indeed, my friend!
Heroes are men—and more than men, depend
On the gods' help—but now, as I have heard,
Perseus thinks the mysteries absurd
And speaks against the gods to whom he owes
All his achievements.
PHINEUS I have heard he does.

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ANDROMEDA Would not the gods, then, smile to see him die?
Indeed, they'd help the man who dared to try
To kill him.

PHINEUS Andromeda, do you mean . . .

ANDROMEDA I am a woman, and I have not been
Taught to bear arms. Were I a man and so
Uneasy as you are, with one sure blow
I'd end my doubts. Yes, I would quickly find
Security. And women change their mind.
Who knows? I may love Perseus again,
And if I did, of what could you complain?

PHINEUS Kill Perseus . . .

ANDROMEDA I see when you declare
You love me, it's a comedy, a mere
Habit.

(Enter Ismene)

PHINEUS What?

ANDROMEDA Were I a man in love
I would not hang about—no, I would prove
My courage like a thunderclap at noon.
Women, like battles, either must be won
Or lost. But here's my cousin, sad Ismene,
Looking for you, no doubt. No, you remain
And think about it.

(Exit Andromeda)

ISMENE Phineus, you seem
Deeply disturbed.

PHINEUS My life is like a dream
Of things undone, or to be done again.

ISMENE What did she say to you?

PHINEUS Nothing, Ismene,
But to remind me of a fact I know.
I am a coward, or reputed so.

ISMENE If she said that, she lies. It is not true.
I know Andromeda—she uses you
Because you love her.

PHINEUS You don't understand.

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ISMENE I understand too well. Here, put your hand
Here on my heart—that's love, it beats for you.
Yes, I know love. Andromeda does too,
For she loves Perseus.
PHINEUS She cannot.
ISMENE No?
Phineus, can you be blinded so?
She loved him in the past, she loves him still,
As long as Perseus lives she will.
PHINEUS I'll do it then.
ISMENE Do what?
PHINEUS Kill Perseus.
That's what we spoke of.
ISMENE No, no, Phineus!
PHINEUS Ismene, I can no longer live in doubt,
Wearing my welcome and my honor out.
Nor will I suffer the comparison
With Perseus any more.

SCENE THREE

(PHINEUS, ISMENE, PERSEUS)

PERSEUS Are you the Princess' cousin, called Ismene?
ISMENE I am.
PERSEUS I wish to speak to her again,
But as a friend. Will you please tell her so,
And I'll wait here. Phineus . . .

(Exit Ismene)

PHINEUS Yes?
PERSEUS You know
This bickering is most inopportune.
You must have heard the rumor there will soon
Be war with Persia . . .
PHINEUS I have heard of it.
PERSEUS In times of crisis we cannot permit
These quarrels. Ethiopia and Greece
Have been allies in battle and in peace,

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But if Andromeda should so decide
She could disrupt your councils and divide
The army into factions.

PHINEUS That is true.

PERSEUS Exert your influence, Phineus, for you
Are close to her!

PHINEUS What would you have me do?

PERSEUS Remind her that we have a common cause.
This thought, if nothing else, should give her pause.
When I speak with her, passion intervenes,
But you can reason with her, and she leans
Upon your judgment.

PHINEUS I will speak to her.

PERSEUS Do so!

(Enter Andromeda)

ANDROMEDA You sent for me to mock me, Perseus?

PERSEUS Nothing was ever further from my mind
Than to distress you. I have been unkind
Perhaps, in answering—but your own spite
Aroused my anger.

ANDROMEDA Perseus, you're right.
I must confess a woman's failing—when
We have been rejected by the men
To whom we gave our love, we sometimes tend
To show our feelings.

PERSEUS I would be your friend.

ANDROMEDA Ismene is crying, Phineus. Did you say
Something to hurt her? Go . . .

PHINEUS No, I will stay.

ANDROMEDA Do as I say. We will talk later. Leave us.

(Exit Phineus)

You wish to be my friend now, Perseus . . .
You're charitable. I appreciate
The effort you have made to curb your hate.
The courtesy of Perseus is known
Through all the world—the fault must be my own.
But may I ask, if you have not returned

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To mock Andromeda, whom you have spurned,
What purpose, Prince, has torn you from the arms
Of other women, whose more varied charms
Lighten your labors?

PERSEUS I will ignore what you insinuate,
Andromeda. It is the hero's fate
To have men's love, their gratitude, their blame,
Whether he wills or not. I am the same
Creature I was so many years ago
When, buffeted by fortune to and fro,
Friendless, I set out on my first adventure
To kill the Gorgon. Then, you may be sure,
Nobody blamed me—no, nor offered aid.
Now here I stand, myself, the man I made,
And I owe nothing, neither thanks nor hate.
But since I see you are determined . . .

ANDROMEDA Wait!
Look there, Perseus.

PERSEUS What?

ANDROMEDA Do you not know
This place?

PERSEUS It is familiar, as though
I've seen it in a dream. I have been here.

ANDROMEDA That rock is the unholy altar where
They would have sacrificed me to the beast
That came out of the sea. Admit at least
You do remember it.

PERSEUS This was the place.

ANDROMEDA They brought me there, and there my limbs were chained.
They went away, and I alone remained
With the bare rock, the sky, the burning sea.
To appease the angry god they'd murdered me.
I trembled and I cried, my limbs grew weak.
The sun was rising to the fatal peak,
The minutes went too slowly or too fast.
I stared at the horizon, where no mast
Came to my help. I prayed—the cloudless sky
Gave no response. I was resigned to die.

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And then there was a stirring in the slime
And from the depths the beast began to climb,
The scaly coils were scraping on the sand . . .
I closed my eyes, tore with a bleeding hand
At the tight chains . . .

PERSEUS And then I saw you there
As I came flying through the middle air,
The jutting rock, you lying in your chains,
The monster climbing . . .

ANDROMEDA Nothing now remains
Of what you must have felt, Prince, at that moment.

PERSEUS The heroes did not feel—we simply went.
Descending like a thunderbolt I drew
My curved sword, and with one stroke cut through
The monster's neck, and thrust the gnashing head
Into the sea.

ANDROMEDA And at that stroke I bled.

PERSEUS What do you mean?

ANDROMEDA Look at my wrists—the chains
Have left these scars, but there are other stains,
Invisible and deep, not to be seen,
Binding my heart. Prince, it is love I mean.
Yes, in that dazzling moment when you broke
The chains that tied my body, one more stroke
Would have been kind and freed my spirit too.
Better bound to a rock than bound to you!
It was a cruel favor that you did,
To make me love you!

PERSEUS Princess, have you ended?
How can you blame me, if you fell in love.
I never asked you to.

ANDROMEDA O gods above!

PERSEUS This was an episode and nothing more.
I'd killed the Gorgon a short time before,
And taking the head with me, as I flew
South from the pursuit, by chance I saw you.
I saved your life, then I resumed my road.

ANDROMEDA And that is all it was—an episode!

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PERSEUS Yes. For the days on which I slew the Gorgon
And, slanting the deep eyes, I turned to stone
Lecherous Polydectes and his court,
Those were heroic days! Or when I fought
Beside great Heracles against the shade
That Pluto sent . . . the voyages I made
With Jason in the West . . . those actions were
Necessary. This was an adventure.

(Enter Pyramis)

ANDROMEDA Then I am nothing.
PERSEUS If you'll have it so.
PYRAMIS Prince, there is news from Greece.
PERSEUS Then I must go.
Princess, I have responsibilities
That are most urgent. You too have your duties.
Remember who we are, and be discreet,
And let me hope that the next time we meet
We'll understand each other.

(Exit Perseus)

ANDROMEDA Pyramis!
PYRAMIS What is it, Andromeda?
ANDROMEDA Only this . . .
Tell Perseus . . . tell him to come again
Later. He need not fear that I'll complain,
But there are earnest matters to discuss,
Matters of state, secret. Tell Perseus
It is about some news he should receive
Concerning Jason.

(Enter Phineus)

PYRAMIS He will not believe
A word of it.
ANDROMEDA But you will tell him, though?
PYRAMIS I will, and I will tell him also
You are not to be trusted.

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SCENE FOUR

(ANDROMEDA, PHINEUS)

ANDROMEDA I know the man, I know him, Phineus!
And of his own accord he'll come to us,
For underneath the placid mask he wears
Perseus is troubled, for he fears
The consequences of the past. He'll try
With better arguments to justify
His actions. But I know, and I alone,
Why he is here. He wishes to atone
For the wrong done to me. He does not know
The truth himself, but I am sure it's so.
His life has been pure action—idle now,
He will retrace each scene, remake each vow.
The ordinary man, before he'll do
Anything, takes thought, but not the hero.
He simply acts, and therein lies his strength,
To do and not to think. And yet, at length,
He too must think, and in a short space then
He concentrates the lifelong doubts of men.
Yes, Perseus at last is vulnerable!
And yet, perhaps, if Perseus is able
To think like other men, he can love too . . .

PHINEUS Andromeda, for many years I've served you . . .
All wasted, as I see! My cursed fate
Is still to love you and to serve and wait
While you love Perseus. This is the end!

ANDROMEDA Be patient, Phineus.

PHINEUS No, find some friend
Who's eager as a dog, comes when you call,
Goes when you dismiss him. I've done all
I'll ever do!

ANDROMEDA My friend!

PHINEUS I was prepared
To kill this hero. Yes, I would have dared
What hundreds failed to do. To win your smile
I would have faced a life of long exile.
I would have undergone the last disgrace

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For the reward of one sincere embrace.
But you have changed again—yes, with one breath
You ask for nothing more than Perseus' death,
The next, you want his love . . .

ANDROMEDA I am confused.

(Enter Pyramis)

Pyramis! What answer?

PYRAMIS He refused.
Perseus cannot come. He sends you this.

ANDROMEDA A written message! You say, Pyramis,
He is not coming?

PYRAMIS No. Within the hour
He sails for Greece.

ANDROMEDA He sails?

PYRAMIS The Persian power
Is once more in the field. Instant alarms
Recall the friends of Argos to their arms.
The heroes, scattered in these years of peace,
Gather from every shore to succor Greece.
The red-beaked ships are nodding on the wave,
The market-place is silent as a grave,
And Perseus goes to the temple now
To consecrate his sword and take a vow.
Our youths are flocking to him—it's goodbye
To peace and welcome war! So, Princess, I
Will take my leave of you.

(Exit Pyramis)

ANDROMEDA I am a standing fool in a nightmare,
Always abandoned. What, will I wait here
Forever, while this man will come and go!

PHINEUS Andromeda, I could have told you so.
Perseus did not come back for your sake.
If he thought of you at all, it was to make
His peace with you, for a politic end.

ANDROMEDA He seemed sincere. He wished to be my friend.
I thought he showed some slight signs of affection.

PHINEUS Of course he did! To further his ambition.

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Perseus is too clever to ignore
Your clear infatuation. In this war
You can be useful. Though he has refused
The woman—still, the Princess can be used.
He told me so.

ANDROMEDA Rejected and possessed . . .
He knows me. He will never let me rest.
He knows how, with a word, a smile, a touch,
To make me hope again—but not too much.
No, this was never love, but a disease.
I've prayed to heaven on my naked knees
To cure me of it. There's no cure, it seems.
While he is living I will have bad dreams.
I will be chained to the eternal rock
In terror, till I wake with a cold shock.
And in the days I'll wander on this shore
Where every sail brings Perseus once more.

PHINEUS Well, let us hopefully anticipate
His death in battle.

ANDROMEDA What! And shall I wait
My life away, unhappy and ignored?
I am the battle that he sails toward.
I have more cause than Persia. I will move
The banners and the trumpets of my love.
Phineus . . .

PHINEUS Yes?

ANDROMEDA Do me one last service.
Kill Perseus! If you do, I promise
You'll be repaid in full. Andromeda's
Beauty is not the banquet that it was,
But I will try to satiate your thirst
And appetite.

PHINEUS Read the message first.

ANDROMEDA No. Do you think that I will change again?
Were this to say that Perseus will remain,
I still would be despised. My anguish still
Must have an end. Go, Phineus!

PHINEUS I will.

(Exit Phineus. Andromeda reads the message.)

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SCENE FIVE

(ANDROMEDA, PERSEUS)

(The scene is darkening.)

PERSEUS I am happy to find you, Princess.
ANDROMEDA What!
Why are you here, Perseus? I thought . . .
PERSEUS I see you have the message that I sent . . .
It was, I fear, not very eloquent,
And so I took the chance and slipped aside . . .
The ships will not be sailing till the tide . . .
And came to tell you how much I regret
This sudden parting.
ANDROMEDA I will not forget
You are a hero and you have your duties,
And I too have responsibilities.
PERSEUS Andromeda, I have a troubled mind
And would not for the world leave you behind
Thinking of all the foolish words I used.
I know how carelessly I have abused
Your confidence in the past . . . You seem
surprised . . .
Yes, Princess, I at last have realized
My errors.
ANDROMEDA It is easy to deceive
One who is always ready to believe
A friendly word.
PERSEUS Yes, I admit it now,
I've hurt you—not by any broken vow
Or public contract written in the laws,
But we must answer for the harm we cause
As well as for the malice we intend.
I saved your life—your troubles did not end
So easily, however. I became
Responsible for them. You're right to blame
And to accuse me.
ANDROMEDA No, not any more.
Prince, had you only said one word before
Of kindness—no, not love—but only said

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My carcass was worth more alive than dead,
You could have left and I'd have loved you still
A thousand years, and suffered any evil
And thought it nothing.

(Enter Ismene)

PERSEUS Princess, I must go.
But I'll return. Try to forgive me, though
It seems impossible.

ANDROMEDA Perseus,
Do not lie to me.

PERSEUS Some day we'll discuss
Our feelings with each other. I'm not young
And selfish now. I wish to live among
Friends of my youth and try to find at last
Some happy consequences of the past.
I'm tired of adventures. Heroes have
No measure but their action, like a wave
That wearies of itself. I am worn out
On the far shore.

ANDROMEDA Perseus, never doubt
Your destiny. You are the star we set
Our courses by. Prince, there may be yet
A constellation for you in the sky.

PERSEUS Give me your hand.

ANDROMEDA No . . . more.

(They embrace)

PERSEUS Goodbye.
And pray for me sometimes till I return.

(Exit Perseus)

ANDROMEDA Come back so quickly that the passage burn!
Ismene, he loves me! O you heavenly powers,
Draw on the nights, the days, the heavy hours,
Bend him back to me! I will pace the shore
Crying for happiness. Let the straight oar
Thresh the blue sea, and soft winds swell the sails
And bring him southward with the nightingales!

ISMENE I too am happy, cousin. May this be

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The ending of your quarrel, and for me
The start of hope. I do not think you'll need
Phineus any more—though he, indeed,
Still loves you.

(Tumult offstage)

ANDROMEDA Now they are shouting and I hear his name.
Yes, let the ocean echo with his fame,
Lift up the trumpets, let the roofs rejoice
And Persia tremble at the noble voice!
Yes, cry the hero, anybody can . . .
But I alone know Perseus the man!

(Enter Phineus)

PHINEUS Andromeda.
ANDROMEDA What is it? Come with me.
Let us go to the harbor wall and see
The sailing of the ships.
PHINEUS They will not sail.
ANDROMEDA What do you mean? What's wrong? You're strangely pale.
What is it, then? Speak quickly!
PHINEUS I have done
The thing we spoke of.
ANDROMEDA You have done
The thing we spoke of. . . ? I remember—yes,
But everything has changed.
PHINEUS Has changed, Princess?
ANDROMEDA I spoke with Perseus just now. He said
He would come back.
PHINEUS Perseus is dead.
He came this way. I followed. And we met.
See, on my hands . . . this is his blood . . . it's wet.
They are pursuing me. I cannot stay.
ISMENE I will go with you.
ANDROMEDA Phineus, you say
You killed him.
PHINEUS Yes.
ANDROMEDA This is a foolish lie.
Tell me the truth! This color is a dye

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You have put on. You would have been afraid.
You could not do it. Yes—perhaps you made
A rash attempt—perhaps you even did
Dare to attack him—Perseus is wounded . . .

(Exit Phineus, Ismene. Enter Pyramis.)

PYRAMIS If that was Phineus, he will be caught.
And you, Andromeda, who hatched the plot,
You'll answer for it.

ANDROMEDA Perseus is dead?

PYRAMIS You know he is. Or must you hear it said
To enjoy it? This was a most filthy crime.
The world is darkening . . . an evil time
Has come upon us. When I think that you
Owe your own life to him . . .

ANDROMEDA What shall I do!

PYRAMIS It would have been far better had you died
There on your rock.

(Exit Pyramis. Andromeda ascends the rock. In the dark sky bright constellations appear, with Perseus as an armed man.)

ANDROMEDA The gods are not denied
Their sacrifices.
How still and soft it is, the twilight hour.
I feel the soothing, melancholy power
Of passing time. For princesses have gone
And still the tranquil waves come tiding on.
My life was like the trouble that a star
Casts in a dream, mysterious and far.
But I am living—in my life I wake
And find myself once more chained to the stake.
What's night to all the world is noon to me,
And from the surface of the moonlit sea
Monsters and nightmares in disorder rise,
Poseidon with his beard and angry eyes,
My father's hands, the corpse of Perseus,
And love, the monster that devours us.
This is the end, Andromeda remains
On the dark rock, in her immortal chains.

The End

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ANDRE MALRAUX

Lawrence and the Demon of the Absolute

1922. Colonel Lawrence—thirty-three years old—having become one of Winston Churchill's advisors for Arab affairs after the Arabian campaign, the Peace Conference and a temporary retirement, had just returned from the Hejaz, where he had been sent as minister plenipotentiary to the king who owed him his crown. For the first time, he felt himself "on the other side of the barrier". He had just read proofs of The Seven Pillars of Wisdom, *which he had hoped might become one of the "Titanic" books, on a par with* Moby Dick, The Brothers Karamazov *and* Thus Spake Zarathustra.

What follows is not a critique of The Seven Pillars, *but an analysis of the feelings of the author in the presence of his book—feelings which are later to be modified.*

Lawrence had just submitted his resignation, writing to Churchill: "There are many other things I want to do". He had already decided to enlist as a private in the air force under an assumed name.

"THERE ARE MANY OTHER THINGS I want to do." There was only one, and he knew it perfectly well.

To give meaning to his life would involve subjecting it to some unequivocal value; values which carry in themselves this saving power (liberty, charity of heart, God) imply a sacrifice, or the appearance of a sacrifice, on behalf of mankind—whether the man who has chosen them believes in them or not. Whether or not they advertise it openly, they mean to change the order of the world, and on that account, values, like art, are the great allies of man against his fate.

If Lawrence had harshly protected the power which he had won and at first almost usurped, it was because a great action cannot be otherwise carried through. Without doubt, he had been

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profoundly concerned at times that this power take its proper form. But a power whose form would be himself could not similarly attract him. Action for action's sake, power for power's sake were foreign to him. The instinct which pushes a politician towards a ministry, with politics playing the chief role, never made him want to direct the colonial politics of England: what he really wanted was to make sense, once again, of the confusion of what had so far been his fate.

Since the end of 1920, he had been finishing up his prodigious narrative. With half of it done, he reread it straight through, for the first time, between Jidda and Transjordania, with an anxiety which increased as he read. But was he able to judge this text which he knew by heart, where his memory always ran ahead of his writing? Did he read, or did he resume a restless dialogue with all that had passed since he had left the covetous and intractable king? One after the other the boat skirted Rabig, Yenbo, El Ouedj, Akaba. . . .

He had taken his manuscript, corrections made, to the press of the *Oxford Times:* to print up several copies would cost less than to have it typewritten. He had received the proofs in July, his decision to quit the ministry already taken. Now that all action was closed to him, he felt himself even more committed to this intellectual adventure than he had been to the Arabian adventure: imprisoned with the book for his decisive struggle with the angel, left more to himself by the decomposition of everything to which he had so far attached himself; more committed even than he had been by fear of defeat at the time of the Peace Conference and the flight of Feisal. He hoped to recover from these proofs the freshness of sight and judgment which his manuscript no longer could give him. He found them, in effect: a book a little better than those written by "the majority of retired army officers", with some hysterical passages.

The excitement of the Revolt had been as obvious to him as the comedy of the Peace Conference against which he had attempted rebellion: but the cupidity of the Arabs had never seemed any the less to him because, to Arab eyes, English wealth appeared inexhaustible and not to profit from it stupid, since all money won in combat was nobly won. Lawrence knew that his reader, whoever he might be, would expect purity from a national movement. An ordinary soldier might be alternately a hero and a

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plunderer; but from the leader, even from a mere participator in a revolt, national or social, the fraternal sentiments of the reader would accept nothing but exemplary actions. What runs counter to the revolutionary convention is, in revolutionary histories, suppressed more imperiously than embarrassing episodes in private memoirs, and by the same obscure forces.

Lawrence had written: *I saw an epic born before my eyes,*— and revealed an endless series of shady dealings. Of the leader of the Juheinas who had murmured while watching Feisal's army: *Now we are a people* . . . , Lawrence knew that several months later he had abandoned the Arab cause. The oath imposed by Feisal had been no more than a truce, even in the minds of those who prepared it. At every victory, at Akaba, at Deraa, the vendetta started up again; at Damascus this had not been merely the folly of Abd-el-Kader who had immediately forced the victorious army to fight with its allies. The Arabs had wanted less to create Arabia than to harass the Turks. The Syrians did not want to create Syria: the word Syria does not exist in Arab. Nothing, apart from hatred of the Turks, had united the intellectuals of Beirut and the Druses. But to the eyes of a European, every national movement is first of all brotherhood. . . .

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What was admirable in the Revolt was not that visionary campaign by which the Arabs were going to renew the birth of the Islamic epic; rather was it that men, by turn courageous and weak, greedy and generous, heroic and impure like all men (and more than most), should reconquer their historic capital in spite of all their weaknesses. Lawrence had expected to rediscover the enthusiasm which the Revolt had inspired among the crowds in the Albert Hall, but by grounding it in the truth: the same emulation which opposed him to "Lawrence of Arabia" opposed his narrative to the legend. In that respect he needed most of all lyricism, the great medium for the expression of enthusiasm. It was necessary, in spite of the dickerings, the defections, the treasons, that the reader be carried away by one of those exalting epics of generosity which make one believe that a few inspired days can hold all the beauty of the world. Lyricism alone could do it; not the descriptive lyricism which lives from what it carries away,

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but the transfiguring lyricism which lives from what it contributes. An artist's gifts, alas, are not always those he needs the most: and Lawrence behaved like a writer who wanted to write the kind of epic that Victor Hugo made of Waterloo, but who in fact possessed only the gifts which permitted Stendhal to make it into a comedy.

That the Revolt inspired in him feelings whose contradictions he had not overcome until he had first of all written a brief for the defense, he realized as soon as he began to write. The only way of not being paralyzed by them was not to impose on his book any premeditated structure He had put his memory to work on the thread of his war diary or notes left on the margin of agendas: the very wording had been haphazard. The dynamiting of a bridge, an attack on a train—things which involved some preparation; his comrades in arms, his reversals of fortune—all this permitted lengthy exposition, for as far as his memory could carry him. But what of the organization of an intelligence service, made up of conversations all alike and which, carried on in another language, could not be used to describe the characters of those who held them? For everything involved in the secret service, for the execution of his major project—to make the Arabs arrive first at Damascus—Lawrence had chosen to be, if not secretive, at least swift. Hence a singular perspective in which all the aid brought to Allenby by the breakthrough which had forced the Turks to sue for an armistice seemed less important than an attack on two trains, the discovery of Feisal's negotiations with the Turks less important than the treason of Abd-el-Kader. Lawrence now discovered that a detailed account of his acts was far from being the best means of expressing his action. He had wanted to bear witness to the revival of a people, and it sometimes seemed to him that he was rereading the memoirs of a dynamiter. . . .

So much so that having written to add grandeur to a vaguely legendary insurrection, he asked himself if the first question of his reader about the Revolt itself would not be: *Was that all it amounted to?*

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At any rate, he would have written the only history of the Revolt. But he did not believe in history. He believed in art.

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And the implacable evidence that these agonized days forced on him, when he read the printed book as if it were the work of someone else, was that the book was not a work of art. . . . *The fact that it wasn't a work of art rose up and hit me in the face, and I hated it, because artist is the proudest profession.*

The writing of a journalist; *refuge in second hand words.* . . . If, by dint of work, he succeeded in giving this kind of writing the proper tone, he ceased to expect of it that regal gift which reconciles contradictions, which mixes strength and weakness in a transfigured whole.

His book was not a great narrative. The history of narrative technique for the last three centuries, like that of painting, has been essentially a search for a third dimension; for that which, in the novel, eludes narration; for what makes it possible not to narrate but to represent, to make present. Narration expresses a past whose total effect—scene by scene—is that of a present. Just as the painters developed perspective, the novelists found in dialogue and atmosphere a means of effecting this transformation. Even modern narrative art can boast of a just proportion between what is represented and what is related. What a vivid succession of scenes Dostoievski would have made of such memories! Lawrence's narrative predominated to such a degree in his episodes that he recovered nothing, in this stiff and linear book, of the passion that had made him write up to twenty hours a day. Was it enough that he had avoided banalities, coynesses, concessions? That he was confident of having escaped vulgarity? The absence of premeditated perspective, his submission to the diary, had handicapped him with an absence of artistic perspective, had restricted him to an action on a single plane. That whole background of evil in its obsessive opposition to every ideal, that absurdity which Lawrence so poignantly felt and which might have been so well expressed—the savagery of discipline amongst his bodyguard, those whipped men with never-healing scars, wandering about him while he read *La Morte d'Arthur*, who never ceased wildly contradicting what was most pure in his will to victory and his determination not to let a single man be needlessly killed: all this he could only make into a bitingly picturesque vignette.

This book, considering it only as a book of memoirs, should at least have been able to recapture, in dealing with individuals, the mystery that possessed its author. What sort of existence did

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these people lead? That of the Arabs scarcely went beyond the picturesque, that of the English beyond a crude sketch. What reader, the book closed, "knows" Joyce, Young, Clayton? The most characterized person, Feisal, is he not a sort of official portrait?

One cannot reveal the mystery of human beings in the form of a plea for the defense. . . .

He questioned whether the knowledge of a man was a knowledge of his secrets, being eager to the point of mania not to be confounded with his own. But had he reached by other ways that pulse of irrationality by which a character comes alive, which fascinates the great memorialist as much as the great novelist, Saint-Simon as much as Tolstoy? These beings glimpsed during the action he instinctively brought into focus, caught in the meaning which the action so often imposed upon them. None of them carried the germs of his future destiny; the events seemed, not to bring out a part of these people so far merely touched on, but to transform them entirely. To what part of the knight Aouda belonged his negotiations with the Turks; to what part of Feisal, Saracen prince and judge of Israel, his negotiations for a separate peace?

Lawrence would have wanted in his book, as in those of his masters, unexpected actions that would illuminate the secret nature of the man from whom they sprung. But he, whose companions had almost never caught him off guard (once: when Zeid had squandered the money entrusted to him), leaned towards the conventional in the *portrayal* of individuals. The greed of Aouda surprised him less than it surprises the reader. Throughout this book in which complexity plays so large a role, has he really portrayed strongly any but simple, secondary beings? The soul of Abd-el-Kader was without doubt unintelligible, nor would the reader accept it unless he knew that Lawrence was reporting the facts. In a fiction the Algerian would have been unacceptable; but the characters of the great memorialists are people in whom the reader would believe even if he knew that the author had created them out of whole cloth. . . .

The whole ending is an anti-climax. Perhaps this was first of all because he was no longer unaware, at the time of writing, of where this epic would end. But a Melville, even a Conrad, would have found, beyond the atmosphere which Lawrence had perhaps

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achieved, the supreme source of poetry which makes of deception, of despair, not a paralysis but a tragedy. Solitude and inner defeat, the futility of epics, are also powerful means of art. What he failed to achieve was the transfiguration which should have been extended even to his memories in order to establish their meaning, to bring them on a level with the eternal.

And the Revolt was only a frame for an *Ecce Homo,* scourged like the other, lacerated like the other. Lawrence had begun to write after the speech of Feisal to the Conference, apparently in an appeal to history against injustice, actually in an appeal to art against the absurd. It was not only the Revolt he expected to save from absurdity, but his own action, his own destiny. The only means the spirit has for escaping the absurd is to involve the rest of the world in it, to imagine it, to express it. Little by little, without any change of frame, the Revolt began to take second place while the main interest passed to the absurdity of life for a man reduced to solitude by an irreducible inner conflict and the meditation it imposed. The subject of the book he believed he was writing had become the struggle of a being lashed without mercy by the scorn which he felt for certain appeals of his own nature, by a fatality acknowledged, with terrible humiliation, as a permanent failure of his will,—against the passionate resolution of this same being to kill his demon with great conquering strokes of lucidity. *I wrote my will across the sky in stars. . . .*

The Turks in retreat, Feisal at Damascus, he himself legendary with a legend both exalting and mocking—and weary of everything, weary to death, except for those pages which crumbled between his hands—was he wrong to believe such a struggle worthy of *The Brothers Karamazov?* That he had paid the heaviest price for his revelation, that this inner conflict may or may not have been due to some unsoundness in his character, reflects on neither its value nor its meaning; even the sanest man who tries to conduct his life intelligently loses control of himself once in a while. Man is absurd because he is master neither of time, nor of anxiety, nor of Evil; the world is absurd because it involves Evil, and because Evil is the sin of the world.

This drama might have been expressed by everything that separated Lawrence from the Arab movement; his narrative actually concerned itself with everything that should have bound him to it. What actually separated him from the Revolt, what he wanted

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to express in order to make his book great, is that every human action is defiled by its very nature. The portrait he wanted to paint was the anatomical sketch of a man who examines everything his own, or that might be his own, with the poisoned lucidity of the atheist of life.

He seemed as concerned to conceal this man as he had been to conceal the secret animator of the Revolt. To follow, as he had resolved, the order of his war diary, he had begun his narrative with his debarkation at Jidda: and, rereading it after having written the first six books, he felt so far removed from it that he added an introduction during his flight to Cairo. There, he said in clear but abstract language what he wanted to say: he was carried away at first by the appeal of liberty and was so completely committed to its service that he ceased to exist; he lived under the constant threat of torture; his life was ceaselessly crossed by *strange longings fanned by privations and dangers;* he was incapable of subscribing to the doctrines he preached for the good of his country at war; they knew the need for degradation; he ceased to believe in his civilization or in any other, until he was aware of nothing but an intense solitude on the borderline of madness; and what he chiefly recalled were *the agony, the terrors and the mistakes.*

What were the degradation, the terrors and the mistakes? Every priest knows that confession in the abstract costs little. The concrete admission, here, would have consisted in picturing himself *during* the mistake, in embodying himself in the phantom who said: *I.* His first narrative finished, he realized anew how much the matter discussed in this introduction was absent from the book. Throughout his text, it seemed to him that he was running after himself. *Then* he had described the introspective crisis of his thirtieth birthday, his portrait. A representation clear and cruel, but still abstract: the modesty born of his physique and of his dissimilarity; the constant split which made his inner life *a standing court martial;* his pride; his appetite for glory and deceit, his scorn of this desire; his implacable will; his distrust of ideas; his need for relief from his intelligence; his anguished self-consciousness which led him to try to see himself through the eyes of others; his lack of all faith and his search for the limits of his strength; his need for degradation (in the first person, this time); his disgust, so great that *only weakness delayed me from*

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mind-suicide; finally, and above all: *I did not like the 'myself' I could see and hear. . . .*

This was the man who said: *Feisal was a brave, weak, ignorant spirit trying to do work for which only a genius, a prophet or a great criminal, was fitted. I served him out of pity, a motive which degraded us both. The Seven Pillars* never ceased to demonstate the opposite. . . . The introduction was an introduction to his secret memories much more than to his book; his drama, his portrait, were written in the margin; and only the incarnation of this portrait would have made *The Seven Pillars* not an historical fresco but a book of the order (if not of the genius) of *The Brothers Karamazov* and *Zarathustra,* the great accusatory work of which he had dreamed.

Little by little, because all the battles resolved themselves finally into a tardy and melancholy victory, and above all because, for him, art insensibly supplanted action, the Arab epic became in his mind the medium for a grandiose expression of human emptiness. Also, for *I wrote this to show what a man can do,* secret echo of his angers in Paris, was substituted, with the bitter sound of the two words *A Triumph* which he had added to the subtitle: *I wrote this to show what the gods are able to make of us. . . .*

In the absolute, the triumph is a mockery—but so is the triumpher. Lawrence knew it quite well, and this was the secret meaning of such episodes as those in the hospital or at Deraa, accurate or not. A man's own lucid self-portrait—if there were in the world a single man lucid enough to recount his life—would be the most virulent indictment of the gods which could be imagined: as great as the man himself was great. The lucid hero, if he penetrates ever so little into this forbidden domain, can but choose between the absurd and original sin. But if one wants to express the human mystery by saying "Behold the man", one must offer something more than a close-mouthed confession. . . .

Lawrence's nature was opposed to confession both by the violence of his pride and by that of his modesty. At least, of that modesty born of the fear of giving a handle to the reader, that of characters in Russian novels whom the familiarity with public confession cannot free from an obsessive dread of ridicule; and also, of the fact that Lawrence considered almost everything he had achieved to be negligible—or certainly less important than what he had dreamed of achieving. His correspondence reveals,

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in general, strikingly more noblesse than he had admitted to in *The Seven Pillars* (with the exception of his will to save the lives of his fellow-fighters). He said that he remembered first of all his mistakes, and scarcely revealed any of them (defeats, yes: not without greatness); he said that he had undertaken his campaign for the love of one of his companions: this companion he suppressed.

For a moment he considered doing the whole book over again. But how could he have done it? These pages had been first written as he lashed his memory during bouts of insomnia, six months after the capture of Damascus. When they were lost, he recomposed them with exhausting effort. Corrections would not have changed the perspective: he would have been unable to rewrite it all, and would thus have lost the fine temper which, at least, was the reward of the historical witness that now seemed to him so vain. Why would the demon that had already twice paralyzed him have been defeated the third time? It was himself.

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And a more subtle poison emanated still from those pages which crumbled between his fingers. Profoundly though he may have been involved in the artistic success of his book, he was not solely involved in that. Whoever writes his memoirs (except to deceive) judges himself. There were in this book, as in all memoirs, two *personae:* the one who said *I,* and the author. What Lawrence had done, was embodied in the person who acted: what he was, in the rectifier and judge of this other—in the writer. It was the writer (not as artist but as judge) who was to enable Lawrence to subordinate his legend to himself instead of remaining subordinated to it: who in the spiritual order was to serve the exemplary Lawrence as the rejection of all reward had served him in the moral order.

Literary talent was no longer in question; but being, human density. Lawrence knew that the greatness of a writer lies less in what he promulgates than in the place from which he speaks; that Tolstoy portraying a wounded person watching the nighttime clouds at Austerlitz, or the banal functionary Ivan Ilych confronted by death, is no less great than Dostoievski making the Grand Inquisitor speak. A Tolstoy would have been able to draw

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from the death of the humblest Arab soldier the splendid and bitter meaning of the Revolt; because he had Tolstoy's talent, but first of all because he was Lev Nikolaevich. The power of Christ's reply in the presence of the adulterous woman is not a matter of the talent of the evangelists. And the demon of the absurd appeared in the cruelest guise: if Lawrence had not expressed the man he believed he was, was it not simply because he was not that man?

And if he was not that man, he was nothing.

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But this man, whom he judged himself *guilty* of not being, what was he? The veinstone of the exemplary persona which legend was forcing him to substitute, if only for his own sake, for Lawrence of Arabia. A persona as to which he knew, moreover, *what it was not,* and very imperfectly what it was. Modern individualism invokes its hero, but does not comprehend him. Aside from the art, Zarathustra is not the greatest strength, but the greatest weakness of Nietzsche. . . .

The idea of great personality confronts us with two human figures. The first is that of the man who has accomplished great things and who is assumed to be able to accomplish others, in other fields. This figure becomes less and less convincing because action is increasingly tied to a technique, while great personality implies the attainment of a point from which techniques would be mastered; the modern dream, like the most ancient ones, wishes a dictator to be a *strategos,* but it does not believe it. History seems to us less and less a guarantee of greatness. Lawrence now believed that he knew how easily men have granted great personalities to those who have merely met with great destinies.

The other figure is more complex, because more diverse types are combined in it. But it derives entirely from the domain to which Lawrence owed his formation and his dreams: literature. For his own imagination as for ours, Nietzsche was not a professor whom his mother called Fritz and who, for the rest, wrote some great unknown books; Dostoievski was not a sick gambler and man of letters; each of them was first of all a mythical figure born of all the writings he had signed, like a character in a novel born of all the words the author has put in his mouth. The dream we

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create for ourselves out of such personalities is an imaginary aptitude for using what they have written as replies to the questions posed for them by life and by men. They have a reply for everything, because for everything they have only a single reply. They have reached the pinnacle of intelligence which commands nearly all the approaches, and which would dictate their behavior if they became equal to their genius. But, this "pinnacle" has only one name: truth. A great personality, in this somewhat troubled domain where art and thought are mixed, is a man by whom an essential truth is expressed.[1]

But the relationship that unites Friedrich Nietzsche to the exemplary Nietzsche delineated by death is always hypothetical, and a great thought, moreover, only involves the presumption of a great personality. This rests considerably less in the extent of his intellectual powers than in their embodiment. It is rare for an intellectual martyr not to give us the illusion of a considerable personality, when he would be able to demonstrate only the strength of his resolution. For the great living personality exists precisely in the bond between thought and act. Who dies in accordance with his thought, suggests that he would have known how to live correspondingly. The kind of great personality which Lawrence vaguely imagined—the kind that many of us vaguely imagine—was a truth incarnated, come to life: Nietzsche become Zarathustra. It was not a prestige that he dreamed of, but the possession of its fullness: what he most passionately desired and what he least possessed.

He had always been profoundly at odds with himself. *I was very conscious of the bundled powers and entities within me; it was their character which hid . . .*, he thought in Arabia. And this dislocation was not one of the least elements in his strength, when it goaded him to action; out of action, it was only suffering. What fascinated him without his being able to understand it clearly was the existence of this center whose absence was intolerable to him, this unconquerable density that Dostoievski expressed in his *starets* Zossima.

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[1]The sage falls within this domain: kindly or austere, the mastery with which he controls his passions can only be exerted in the name of a truth, even if this should be a conviction of the futility of things; Socrates, the sage whose image Plato imposed for centuries upon men, owed not a few celebrated annoyances and the essence of his prestige to his concern for bearing witness to the truth. And who cannot see that Montaigne, Renan, Goethe in defending their truth less firmly, yet defend it with no less conviction than Pascal his own?

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This profound and complete self-identity of being obsessed him, because he knew it capable of what he had demanded successively of action and of art: of overcoming man's feeling of dependence. But this supreme consciousness, if not necessarily Christian, is without doubt necessarily religious. The great personality as Lawrence conceived him is the saint or prophet—minus God. Goethe had never interested him, and Shakespeare he thought of as *the greatest poet*, . . . but a *second rate intellect.* The tragic man has nothing to do with wisdom; the tragic cannot be for him only a phase of life, a stage on the way to serenity: for in him, body or soul is incurable. He seeks for invulnerability rather than serenity. Zossima is invulnerable. The English judge who condemns Gandhi consults him about the penalty (very severe, as a matter of fact) which is going to be inflicted on him, and adds: "Even your adversaries regard you as a highly idealistic man, whose life is noble and even saintly. . ." Even if he had insulted him, nothing would have been changed.

But such personalities are entirely animated by the terrible power of humility that Dostoievski spoke of: far from representing the individuality's possession of itself, they are its total loss: it is consumed with that which it wanted to consume in itself, and flares in its tranfiguration.

Now, Lawrence, one of the most religious spirits of his time, if one defines a religious spirit as one who experiences the anguish of being a man to the depths of his being; Lawrence who received a religious education in England, studied under the Jesuits in France, whose mother and brother were missionaries, who called *The Brothers Karamazov* a fifth Gospel, neither in the nine hundred odd pages of his letters nor in his books wrote fifty lines about Christianity. He had, under his pride, if not humility at least a powerful and spasmodic taste for self-humiliation, now by discipline and now by veneration; a horror of respectability; a disgust for possessions, for money, a distinterestedness which took for itself the form of charity of heart; a thoroughgoing sense of his guilt, pursued by his angels or his minor demons, a sense of evil, and of the nothingness of almost everything that men cling to; a need for the absolute, an instinctive taste for asceticism. He appeared to belong among those whom Jesus, eternally on the Cross, chooses to carry away to the final solitude. But he no more believed in the religion of his own people than he believed in their

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civilization. And there was in him an element markedly anti-Christian: he expected forgiveness from nobody but himself. He looked not for an assuagement but a victory, a peace by force of conquest. *One of the sorest things in life is to come to realize that one is just not good enough. Better perhaps than some, than many, almost—but I do not care for relatives, for matching myself against my kind. There is an ideal standard somewhere and only that matters: and I cannot find it. Hence this aimlessness.*

The Absolute is the last resort of the tragic man, the only solace, because it alone can consume—even if the whole man is consumed with it—the deepest feeling of dependence, remorse at being one's self.

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IRVING HOWE

Turgenev: the Virtues of Hesitation

WHAT A TORMENT, wrote the Russian playwright Griboyedov, "to be an ardent dreamer in a land of eternal snows." In this complaint, we may be sure, the Russian weather should be taken as a metaphor for Russian society. Himself implicated in the liberal (Decembrist) revolt of 1825, Griboyedov was thinking of the impossible position—it was never to be anything but impossible—of the enlightened young Russian who desires to serve his country. In Griboyedov's famous comedy *The Mischief of Being Clever* the theme of estrangement from society is pursued with a fullness and bitterness that is hardly to be surpassed in 19th century European literature. Chatsky, the hero of the comedy, is perhaps the first in the line of "superfluous men" that will wind its way through Russian literature; superfluous not in the sense that he suffers, as do most of Turgenev's heroes, from a psychological malaise but rather that he brings to the homeland, from his several years in the West, an intellectual vigor which to the Russian bureaucrats seems not so much subversive as merely foolish. Eager for love, eager for friendship, ideas and experience, Chatsky soon races through the gamut of disillusion: he is exposed to officials of vast complacence, old soldiers who believe all books should be burned, courtiers who have perfected the art of crawling. Having seen all he can bear, Chatsky flees Russia once again.

For the Russian writers who follow Griboyedov, *The Mischief of Being Clever* is both model and inspiration. In Russia the Byronic hero becomes a type more prevalent, and with a deeper justification, than in any other country of Europe: here, indeed, the man of sensibility had cause for despair. The critic Herzen saw "in the figure of Chatsky, melancholy, retiring into his irony, trembling with indignation and visionary feeling . . . a Decembrist, a man who completes the epoch of Peter I, and strives to discern, at least on the horizon, the promised land he will never see." Griboyedov himself defined his hero with still greater precision: "A man in contradiction to the society that surrounds him . . .

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nobody understands him, nobody is willing to forgive him for being a little above the rest."

That so many Russian literary heroes should be "superfluous men" seems almost inevitable: in 19th century Russia no other kind of hero is possible. The problem faced by many Russian writers was whether to conceive of the superfluous hero as energetic or passive, a man who discards society or a man whom society breaks. If we glance at a few of the major heroes of 19th century Russian literature—Pushkin's Onegin, Lermontov's Pechorin, Goncharov's Oblomov—we see that while radically different in temper they suffer from a similar disability in relation to the life of their time. Onegin lacks Chatsky's commanding spirit, his gift for transcending an immediate problem by seeing it as a public issue. Onegin is a dandy where Chatsky is a robust young man; Onegin cannot rise to his situation while Chatsky refuses to sink to his. Yet they are complementary figures, both doomed to the role of outsider, the one through an excess of wit and the other through an excess of sensibility.

So too are Pechorin and Oblomov. Pechorin, the most Byronic of Russian literary heroes, cannot achieve spontaneity in either behavior or feeling: he must watch every move he makes. In Oblomov the will to action has been entirely dissipated: he is the hero run to seed, superfluous even to himself. Pechorin is constantly on the move and Oblomov forever on his back, yet in their distance from society, if not the point from which that distance is to be measured, they are very much alike.

Heroes of estrangement, all of these figures must suffer the frustration of being unable to act heroically. As Griboyedov once cried out: "By what black magic have we become aliens among our own! . . . A people of the same blood, our people is estranged from us; and for ever."[1]

II

Turgenev is often described as the most balanced of Russian writers, the spokesman for moderation in a literature of wildness. He is a writer—so the story goes—of soft nostalgia and mellow restraint, of pastel colors and atmospheric shadings; he is notable for a pervasive melancholia rather than psychological intensity.

[1]For some of the historical material in the above section, I am indebted to an excellent book published in England several years ago: *The Hero of His Time*, by Henry Gifford.

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All of which is true; but not true enough, not the whole truth. If Turgenev is to engage the serious reader of our day, he must be rescued from his reputation, not by twisting him into a miniature Dostoevsky but by restoring to him some of the balancing tensions that were actually present in his life and work.

Deep into his adult life Turgenev struggled against the tyrannical power of his mother, unable to surrender completely to her will or to break fully from her grasp. It is surely not too speculative to suggest that a large amount of his personal and literary indecisiveness can be traced back to this exhausting struggle. Like many men in whom the maternal tie is very strong, he was painfully split in his feelings toward women, most of them absorbing him solely on the level of appetite, while for but one, Pauline Viardot, could he retain a romantic attachment. In his ambiguous relations with Madame Viardot, Turgenev seems finally to have accepted the role of an adopted family uncle. Exactly what he meant to her we hardly know, but for him she seems to have been friend, confidante and surrogate mother.

In Turgenev's novels the sexual relation is almost always frustrated. Except for the conventional ending of *Smoke,* which is also his sourest novel, all of his books end in separation, the loss of the beloved. Remarkable as the lyric-nostalgic tone of his writing often is, Turgenev labored under some deep compulsion—obviously more than bias of temperament or a preference for realism—to tear his characters away from each other. Turgenev's pure and beautiful heroines are always wooed but seldom won; and while the heroes admire and appreciate them, it only to the cold, graceful and sophisticated women, the dark lady or bitch enchantress personified by Irina in *Smoke,* that they respond sexually. To rouse the heroes of Turgenev's novels, women must be inaccessible, unpredictable, perverse; they must display feminine attractions but possess un-feminine qualities; the sexual relationship tempts Turgenev's heroes only when stained with guilt. In his novels—so he found it in life—women are strong and men weak; and those few of his heroes, like Bazarov in *Fathers and Sons,* who prove themselves to be men of strength are projections of traits he knew to be absent in himself. Turgenev seems to have been a man and, in some senses, a writer of disarranged sexuality; only some such speculation makes intelligible his persistent refusal—in some of his novels it comes close to sabotage—of the possi-

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bilities of love. Yet if the sexual impulse in Turgenev's novels seldom reaches any of the usual resolutions, there is a genuine, if limited, recompense. In his best work, and particularly in the *Sportsman's Sketches,* he achieves a tone of pansexual empathy which can soar to a marvellously tender identification with every living creature.

Behind Turgenev's mildness and sweetness of manner there was an extremely anxious man. He was a notorious hypochondriac; he suffered all his life from a death phobia; his addiction to quarrels bordered on the feline. Subject to violent attacks of spleen, he would try to recover his composure by retreating to a corner and staring at the blank wall: again, the naughty boy punishing himself as once his mother had punished him.

Intellectually, too, Turgenev was far from tranquil. It is hardly true that he, almost alone among the great Russian writers, was a defender of moderate Western liberalism—or rather, such a statement takes into account the formal conclusion but not the turbulent motions of Turgenev's political thought.

Turgenev wrote in the post-1848 epoch, after the failure of the last purely democratic revolutions on the continent. The "twilight aura" that hangs like a softly pencilled cloud over his work is a reflection, to be sure, of a private condition; but it also has its source in the feeling of hopelessness which overwhelmed the Russian intellectuals during the 1850's. The defeat of the revolution in Germany and its disintegration in France affected them even more deeply than it did the Western intellectuals, for they had looked to the West for help and not only was help now unavailable but the West itself seemed in profound crisis. The historical romance between bourgeoisie and proletariat, a romance bred in necessity and uncomplicated by affection, was now at an end; and to the "Westernizing" Russian liberals this brought both dismay and bewilderment, for how could Russia be persuaded to emulate the models they had set before it if those models were themselves beginning to turn rotten? Throughout their careers both Herzen, the most gifted Russian publicist of the time, and Turgenev reflect a sense of having been let down, of being adrift.

Had he died on the barricades in 1848, wrote Herzen, "I would have taken with me to the grave two or three beliefs." At about the same time Turgenev wrote, "An honorable man will end by not knowing where to live"—which was exactly where Turgenev

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did end. And in another letter he burst out: "I prefer Prometheus, I prefer Satan, the embodiment of revolt and individuality."

Between the politically active Herzen and the passive Turgenev there is a certain loose correspondence of thought and mood. Both are given to fluctuations from political enthusiams to political despair, both are homeless wanderers, both cut off from their native soil, increasingly unhappy in the West, yearning for and dreaming of distant Russia. And both are men of literary temperament who have been forced by their time and their conscience to turn, Herzen far more than Turgenev, to the life of politics. The journalist Herzen, unable to achieve unity of thought because unable to act decisively in life, fluttered from classical liberalism to peasant socialism and then to radical slavophilism. Herzen's indecisiveness, wrote Lenin with more accuracy than sympathy, was the reflection of a time when "the revolutionary spirit of the bourgeois democracy was already dying, but the revolutionary spirit of the socialist proletariat was not yet ripe. . . . This explains . . . his pessimism and his many returns to liberalism, which he himself had so often denied and cursed."

These vacillations Turgenev recorded with the precision of a seismograph. The politics of his novels, running through all of them though dominant only in the final one, may be described as a politics of hesitation, reflecting the dilemmas of a cultivated man whose training and instincts lead him to despise politics ("To a man of letters," he wrote, "politics is poison") but whose intelligence and almost feminine receptiveness to the moods of his day lead him to circle about the world of politics. Burdened with an admirable sense of proportion at a time when all of Russian and almost all of Western politics cries out for something more than proportion, Turgenev himself comes to feel that his finest qualities are paltry, even grotesque. His desire for detachment is constantly undermined by a sarcastic, even nasty bitterness. Turgenev's whole experience has taught him the uses of revolt ("I prefer Prometheus, I prefer Satan") but not endowed him with the monolithic intellectual passion that is necessary for revolt.

In another time, another place, Turgenev would certainly have written nothing at all about politics or political people; but as a Russian, and moreover a Russian liberal, he could not help hovering moth-like around the young radicals, attracted by the brightness and fearful of the heat. Turgenev's relations with the radicals

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of his day—as with the radicals of his books—are woven out of a series of misunderstandings, a kind of petulant tragi-comedy. He does not really like them, perhaps because he cannot help admiring them. He cannot tolerate their half-baked knowledge and cocksure manner, and in this he is right, of course, except that they are the first to accept this criticism and then to declare it irrelevant. He is disturbed by their rudeness, yet he really understands it very well, understands it better than he wants to, for in *Fathers and Sons* he creates a hero cut from the burlap of rudeness, thereby displaying the most subtle insight into the political meaning and, at times, the political necessity of rudeness. He courts and cultivates the radicals, he draws their portraits with an exactness, though hardly a gentleness, that astonishes them and wins their praise, since they are people who care more about exactness than gentleness. And then—but here we tumble into comedy—he is hurt by their desire to draw *conclusions* from his novels and they, being as scornful of estheticism as almost all 19th century Russians must be, are astonished at his "frivolity" in not desiring conclusions. Yet neither in life nor art can he fully tear himself away from the uncouth Russian radicals; even in his last years, when he was considered passé by the advanced critics, Turgenev kept contributing funds to the emigre journals. That was the dilemma of the Russian liberals: they could express their sense of outrage only in the company of people who must often have struck them as outrageous.

The first important split between Turgenev and the radicals occurred after the publication of his novel *On the Eve*. In his first novel *Rudin* he had presented a character too weak to live up to his political claims and in his second novel *A House of Gentlefolk* a character whose strength is large yet not large enough to overcome his circumstances. Now, as his "consciously heroic" hero, Turgenev chose a Bulgarian nationalist, Insarov, who is dedicated to liberating his nation from the tyranny of the Turks and who, alone among Turgenev's heroes, is capable of decisive political action. Insarov wins Elena, one of Turgenev's iron-willed heroines, from her other suitors, who are, not accidentally, a frivolous Russian artist and a meek Russian scholar.

This novel was reviewed by a leading radical critic, Dobrolyubov, who saw in Elena the strength and wholeness of the untried Russian people and in her choice of Insarov a necessary political

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course. In his review Dobrolyubov went on to wonder how long it would take before Russia could produce *her own Insarovs* to liberate her "from the Turks at home." When Turgenev saw the proofs of this review he tried to have parts of it suppressed; happily, the editor did not yield.

Dobrolyubov, one feels, was essentially correct. He was not reading into Turgenev's novel but was, so to speak, reading out from it. Why Turgenev had chosen a foreigner for his hero was a legitimate topic for critical analysis, and that analysis could be undertaken only after one had considered what it would have meant to make Insarov a Russian. For this kind of hero Turgenev, whether consciously or not, *had* to choose a foreigner; the Insarovs were not yet possible in Russia or if they were, could be found only in the icy corners of Siberia. If, however, Insarov had been a Russian dealing with the problems of Russian life, Turgenev could have preserved him as an insurgent hero only by transforming his relatively safe nationalism—in Russia no one would have objected to *that*—into some kind of radical politics undermining the class structure. Simply by raising this problem, by transferring Insarov from the Bulgarian air to the Russian earth, Dobrolyubov made clear the meaning of Turgenev's hero. *On the Eve* contained revolutionary implications from which Turgenev shied away, and with good reason: he was not a revolutionary; but it was in the nature of 19th century Russian culture that even the faintest touch of liberalism had revolutionary implications. Turgenev's objection to Dobrolyubov's review was not that it failed to tell the truth but that the truth distressed him—a complaint he might better have directed at his own imagination.

Yet it is very much to Turgenev's credit that he realized the difficulties of his own position as a nonpolitical man who had been forced to take account of political life and had displayed a remarkable insight, if not into political ideas, then into political personality. Like so many of his own heroes, he knew his diagnosis and perhaps even the remedy—he simply lacked the power or the possibility for applying it.

In his essay *Hamlet and Don Quixote* Turgenev projected this problem ideologically, and in his story *The Diary of a Superfluous Man* he reduced it to psychological outline. The essay is an example of the way a writer's obsession with a problem local in space and specific in time can tempt him into constructing an "eternal"

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theory of human behavior. Don Quixote becomes the name of his desire, Hamlet the recognition of his reality; and while Turgenev's division of humanity into actors and observers is neither original nor very persuasive, it gains its immediate point, as its immediate pathos, from the political dilemma that has prompted it.

In *The Diary of a Superfluous Man* a young man, clearly intelligent yet without hopes or prospects, is rejected by a provincial beauty in favor of a dandified nobleman and then, after the nobleman has made off, is again rejected, this time in favor of an elderly bystander. Unable to find a place for himself, the superfluous man feels himself overwhelmed by a condition for which it would be pointless to seek the cause, since it is not so much a social disability or a private failure as the sheer catastrophe of being what he is. He thinks of himself not as neurotic or maladjusted or a victim of society; he is simply . . . a mistake. During an absurd duel with the nobleman, he is made the victim of his antagonist's generosity, and it is at this moment of extreme humiliation—a humiliation, to be sure, of relief—that he declares himself to have been "completely unmanned." This phrase, essential to an understanding of Turgenev's work, prefigures both the psychological and political themes of the novels, where the two will become almost indistinguishable. In *The Diary of a Superfluous Man* the sense of being unwanted is a psychological enigma, a datum of existence that cannot be reduced to other terms. In the novels it acquires a social dimension: Turgenev's heroes define their humiliation as a function of their hope.

If, against Turgenev, we now set George Eliot as a representative figure of the best in both English liberalism and English literature, the comparison is nothing less than startling. Eliot seems more aggressive and self-confident, more *manly*—and not because these qualities are impossible to the Russian soul but because they are inaccessible to the Russian liberal of the 19th century. In George Eliot's novels people of the various social levels can still communicate with each other and even find areas of moral solidarity; one seldom senses in or near her books those social wastes that lie, desolate, just off the margins of Turgenev's novels. Eliot assumes that a degree of congruence between public activity and private feeling is still possible, while Turgenev's heroes recoil in weakness or shatter themselves in strength when they try to establish contact with public life.

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George Eliot's liberalism was sustained by the religious sense she had inherited from her family, as indeed from the whole tradition of the English middle-class, and later by the "religion of humanity" which permitted her to transfer her moral energies from the traditional objects of worship to an ethic of duty and sympathy. In *Felix Holt* she instinctively rooted her hero's political radicalism in the tradition of religious dissent, so that even her most stringent criticism of English life is also a kind of tribute to its vitality. Turgenev, however, could find no support in the Russian church: he lacked Dostoevsky's appetite for messianism. In him the religious impulse, if it ever existed, had long been dissipated—and the "religion of humanity" could hardly have satisfied a Russian liberal tormented by his distance from humanity. Eliot was a writer of considerable moral security; Turgenev was one of the first modern esthetes, turning to that worship of art which flourishes whenever more universal forms of belief crumble. Turgenev's liberalism was far less vital than Eliot's, far less imbedded in national realities; yet by a curious spin of history, it now seems closer to us, closer to our indecisions and hesitations.

The most interesting problem in reading Turgenev is to reconcile his two sides, the romantic-idyllic and the political. This can easily lead to trouble, for by imposing an ideological weight upon a lyrical narrative one may destroy its organic quality, particularly if it is a narrative as fragile and delicate as Turgenev's usually are. Yet Turgenev himself prompts us to take the chance, he continually and systematically provides us with the necessary clues. At the risk of being schematic I would suggest that the romantic-idyllic side of his work may profitably be seen as an analogue of his political side.

Turgenev's least ideological as also his loveliest novel, *A House of Gentlefolk,* is concerned with the hero of strength and integrity, Lavretsky, a democratic slavophile who returns to Russia after a disastrous marriage abroad. Repelled by the West, he has come back to the homeland in order, as he significantly puts it, "to till the land." Here he meets Lisa, the most madonna-like of Turgenev's heroines. Still tied to the peasants yet possessed of a modest cultivation, she is a figure of true moral repose, an embodiment of the idea of Russian purity to which all the Russian writers return again and again. To gain our credence Turgenev must isolate her from the coarse realities of Russian life; he there-

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fore places his story in one of those shaded country gardens, charming in their slight decay, that appeal so deeply to his sense of nostalgia, one of those gardens that signify traditional Russia minus vodka and the knout. For a moment Lavretsky and Lisa draw toward each other. He hears that his wife has died abroad, he hopes . . . but the wife has not died, she returns, simpering in French, which for Russian novelists is the language of affectation.

Are we to read this story simply as a personal tragedy, another of Turgenev's bitter-sweet tales of disappointment? That element is certainly there and is not to be slighted, but I think we must see something more. I think Turgenev is saying, by the most exquisite indirection, that when the Russian intellectual comes home, trying to break away from the West that has become contaminated and turning to the remaining purities of Russia, he will again be frustrated: his cosmopolitan experience, which he cannot undo, makes him unfit for the task of reaching the heart of Russia. The private tragedy of Lavretsky is, on one plane of meaning, the tragedy of Russian liberalism, the tragedy of a politics of homelessness and homesickness. What else are we to make of the following passage—a central passage in the book—where Lavretsky muses to himself about the Russian soil:

> 'Here I am at the very bottom of the river,' thought Lavretsky again. 'And always, at all times life here is quiet, unhasting,' he thought; 'whoever comes within its circle must submit; here there is nothing to agitate, nothing to harass; one can only get on here by making one's way slowly, as the ploughman cuts the furrow with his plough. And what vigor, what health abound in this inactive place! . . . 'In the love of a woman my best years have gone by,' Lavretsky went on thinking; 'let me be sobered by the sameness of life here, let me be soothed and *made ready, so that I may learn to do my duty without haste.*' (Emphasis added.)

In his best work Turgenev's two sides achieve an organic fusion; in his life, of course, this could seldom happen. "We have hard times to go through," wrote Turgenev to Flaubert, "we who are born onlookers."

III

In all but one of his novels, Turgenev's major characters are students. And most of these students are not young men prepar-

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ing to enter society, but older men who have failed to enter society. Rudin, the protagonist of Turgenev's first novel and in many ways his greatest character, bursts into one of those manor-houses so frequent in Russian literature, where the mother is silly and modern, the daughter high-minded and serious, and a circle of friends has been tactfully draped around the action to set off the hero's mind from a number of perspectives. Burning with enthusiasm, yet already stoop-shouldered and middle-aged, this perpetual student charms everyone by his flow of rhetoric and ideas. To stagnant Russia Rudin brings what Turgenev calls "the music of eloquence." His themes are those of a vague bodiless liberalism: man's duty to society, "the special value of education and science," and—speaking as one totally incapable of action—the immediate need for action. We have met these ideas before, on the lips of Chatsky, the Decembrist liberal, who fled from Moscow howling his dismay. Rudin is a Chatsky grown older, gone to seed, repeating the phrases of his youth. Yet he has a genuine gift for dialectic, a true glow of idealistic fervor.

Rudin becomes the darling of the household, playing the confidante and fool to its mistress. He knows that he plays the fool yet he cannot stop, so great is his need for solace and flattery; he yearns, like all frustrated politicals, for *the illusion of an audience*, for in his heart he grasps what we gradually discover while reading the book: that his ideas have no consequence beyond the moment they bubble from his lips, that they survive only in the kinetic flash he arouses in his listeners. Rudin is a Don Juan of the intellect, a spiritual imperialist whose profit comes from the temporary domination he achieves through rhetoric. He is a man who does not know what an experience is, though he knows every conceivable theory about what experience should be. There is a masterful scene in which Rudin offers the girl of the household advice on her relations with another man as a way of tempting her to confess the love she feels for him, Rudin; he does not want the responsibility this confession entails yet he cannot refrain from the thrill of hearing it.

Rudin is a masterpiece of composition. After a brief play upon our sense of expectation, the major figure is thrust full-face before us; his mind seems as impressive to us as to the people in the book; and then slowly, pitilessly he is stripped, one fault after another being revealed through their impression on the secondary

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characters. The novel depends on Rudin's initial impact, as if a full rich chord had been struck and all that followed were the lingering diminution of its overtone. This structure reflects, or embodies, Turgenev's meaning, his view of Rudin's liberalism, which is a liberalism that peters out after one brilliant flash. The second note is never struck—that is the meaning of the book. Yet even as Rudin is so mercilessly deflated, our respect and fondness for him grow; in this paradox lies the greatness of the book. Rudin's weakness is seldom mean, he is not fashionably delusional, his will fails him but his mind never. And this too is marvellously representative of the meaning of liberalism as it registers on 19th century Russia and indeed 19th century Europe: the faults of liberalism multiply yet it lights up a whole epoch of history.

It is characteristic of Rudin that he understands himself completely, both as an individual and a representative figure. In the climax of the novel he proves unequal to the crisis he must confront: his emasculated liberalism finds its equivalent in a failure in personal relations. Unmanned politically, he cannot assert his manhood personally. "Nature," he reflects, "has given me much; but I shall die without accomplishing anything worthy of my powers. . . . My fortune has been strange, ironic; I am always giving myself wholeheartedly, every bit of me—yet in the end can give nothing. I shall end by sacrificing myself for some piece of nonsense in which I do not even believe. Heavens! At thirty-five, still to be preparing to do something!"

Nine years after writing the novel Turgenev added the page that now completes it: Rudin, at the end of July 1848, is in Paris, the revolution has collapsed, and on a side-street he is seen in "an old frock-coat, belted with a red scarf . . . in one hand a red banner, in the other a blunt sabre," charging vainly over an abandoned barricade and being shot down in casual obscurity. David Cecil thinks that in adding this page Turgenev's hand faltered, but I would suggest quite the contrary, that the addition is nothing less than the stamp of genius. The final page bears the same specific weight as all that precede it, for in this page the others are justified, in this page the novel rises from a mere mild pathos to a high ennobling pathos. Paris is the place where Rudin dies, and it is no accident: Paris is the one place he could have lived. It is all delicately right to both Rudin the person and Rudin

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the liberal that he, like Russian liberalism itself, should come to Paris, to the revolutionary West, only when it is too late.

If Rudin has partly been created in Turgenev's own image, Bazarov, the hero of *Fathers and Sons,* is a figure in opposition to that image. The one rambles idealistic poetry, the other grumbles his faith in the dissection of frogs; the one is all too obviously weak, the other seems spectacularly strong. Yet between the two there is a parallel of social position. Both stand outside the manor-house that is Russia, peering in through a window; Rudin makes speeches and Bazarov would like to throw stones but no one pays attention, no one is disturbed.

Like all of Turgenev's superfluous men, Bazarov is essentially good. Among our more high-minded critics, it has been fashionable to look with contempt upon Bazarov's nihilism, to see him as a specimen of Russian boorishness. Such a reading is not merely imperceptive, it is humorless. Would it really be better if Bazarov, instead of devoting himself to frogs and viscera, were to proclaim about Poetry and the Soul? Would it be better if he were a metaphysician juggling the shells of Matter and Mind instead of a coarse materialist talking nonsense about the irrelevance of Pushkin?

For all that Bazarov's nihilism accurately reflects a phase of Russian and European history, it must be taken more as a symptom of political desperation than as a formal intellectual system. Bazarov is a man ready for life, and cannot find it. Bazarov is a revolutionary personality, but without revolutionary ideas or commitments. He is all potentiality and no possibility. The more his ideas seem outmoded, the more does he himself seem our contemporary.

No wonder Bazarov feels so desperate a need to be rude. There are times when society is so impervious to the kicks of criticism, when intellectual life softens so completely into the blur of gentility, that the rebellious man, who can tolerate everything but not being taken seriously, has no alternative to rudeness. How else is Bazarov to pierce the elegant composure of Pavel Petrovich, a typically "enlightened" member of the previous generation who combines the manners of a Parisian litterateur with an income derived from the labor of serfs? Bazarov does not really succeed, for Pavel Petrovich forces him to a duel, a romantic ceremony

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that is the very opposite of everything in which Bazarov believes. During the course of the duel, it is true, Pavel Petrovich must yield to Bazarov, but the mere fact that it takes place is a triumph for the old, not the new. Bazarov may regard Pavel Petrovich as an "archaic phenomenon," but the "archaic phenomenon" still retains social power.

The formal components of Bazarov's nihilism are neither unfamiliar nor remarkable: 19th century scientism, utilitarianism, a crude materialism, a rejection of the esthetic, a belief in the powers of the free individual, a straining for tough-mindedness and a deliberate provocative rudeness. These ideas and attitudes can gain point only if Bazarov brings them to political coherence, and the book charts Bazarov's journey, as an uprooted plebeian, in search of a means of expression, a task, an obligation. On the face of it, Bazarov's ideas have little to do with politics, yet he is acute enough to think of them in political terms; he recognizes that they are functions of a frustrated political passion. "Your sort," he says to his mild young friend Arkady, "can never get beyond refined submission or refined indignation, and that's no good. You won't fight—and yet you fancy yourselves gallant chaps—but we mean to fight . . . We want to smash other people! You're a capital fellow; but you're a sugary liberal snob for all that. . . ." This is the language of politics; it might almost be Lenin talking to a liberal parliamentarian. But even as Bazarov wants to "smash other people" he senses his own helplessness: he has no weapons for smashing anything. "A harmless person," he calls himself, and a little later, "A tame cat."

In the society of his day, as Turgenev fills it in with a few quick strokes, Bazarov is quite as superfluous as Rudin. His young disciple Arkady will marry, have a houseful of children and remember to be decent to his peasants. The older generation does not understand Bazarov and for that very reason fears him. Bazarov's brief meeting with the radicals is a fine bit of horseplay, their emptyheaded chatter being matched only by his declaration, as preposterous as it is pathetic: "I don't adopt anyone's ideas; I have my own." At which one of them, in a transport of defiance, shouts: "Down with all authorities!" and Bazarov realizes that among a pack of fools it is hard not to be a fool. He is tempted, finally, by Madame Odnitzov, the country-house Delilah; suddenly he finds his awkward callow tongue, admitting to her his inability to speak freely of everything in his heart. But

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again he is rejected, and humiliated too, almost like a servant who has been used by his mistress and then sent packing. Nothing remains but to go home, to his good sweet uncomprehending mother and father, those remnants of old Russia; and to die.

Turgenev himself saw Bazarov in his political aspect:

> If he [Bazarov] calls himself a nihilist, one ought to read—a revolutionary. . . . I dreamed of a figure that should be gloomy, wild, great, growing one half of him out of the soil, strong, angry, honorable, and yet doomed to destruction—because as yet he still stands on the threshold of the future. I dreamed of a strange parallel to Pugatchev. And my young contemporaries shake their heads and tell me, 'You have insulted us. . . . It's a pity you haven't worked him out a little more.' There is nothing left for me but, in the words of the gipsy song, 'to take off my hat with a very low bow.'

Seldom has an author given a better clue to the meaning of his work, and most of all in the comparison between Bazarov and Pugatchev, the leader of an 18th century peasant rebellion who was hanged by the Czar. Pugatchev, however, had his peasant followers, while Bazarov . . . what is Bazarov but a Pugatchev without the peasants?

It is at the end of *Fathers and Sons* that Turgenev reaches his highest point as an artist. The last twenty-five pages are of an incomparable elevation and intensity, worthy of Tolstoy and Dostoevsky, and in some respects, particularly in their blend of tragic power and a mute underlying sweetness, superior to them. When Bazarov, writhing in delirium, cries out, "Take ten from eight, what's left over?" we are close to the mad lucidity of Lear in the night. It is the lucidity of final self-confrontation, Bazarov's lament over his lost, his unused powers: "I was needed by Russia. . . . No, it's clear, I wasn't needed. . . ."

Yet this ending too has failed to satisfy many critics, even one so perceptive as Prince Mirsky complaining that there is something arbitrary in Bazarov's death. But given Russia, given Bazarov, how else *could* the novel end? Too strong to survive in Russia, what else is possible to Bazarov but death? The accident of fate that kills him comes only after he has been defeated in every possible social and personal encounter: it is the summation of those encounters.

The theme of frustrated rebellion reappears in Turgenev's last and most explicitly political novel, *Virgin Soil,* but this time in a muted tone. The novel has been mishandled by Turgenev's critics,

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most of whom, like Prince Mirsky, have dismissed it on the tedious ground that it failed to give an accurate picture of the Russian Populists of the 1860's. If historical accuracy exhausted the interest of the book, their complaint would count most heavily; but as it happens, precisely Turgenev's inaccuracies, if such they were, make for the novel's interest at the present time; *Virgin Soil,* of all his novels, is closest to us in mood and material.

Reading the novel is like being in an erratically lighted theatre: there are moments of intense brilliance, moments of annoying dimness, moments when everything blacks out. The book is a tired, willed book; not that Turgenev doesn't know what to do, for that he always knew, but that he now lacks the energy to do it.

The theme of alienation dominates *Virgin Soil,* as it does all of Turgenev's novels; its hero Nezhdanov is a bastard of noble birth and, correspondingly, a spiritual orphan. A lover of poetry, he wishes, in the Russian phrase of the time, to "go to the people." Abstractly, his problem is similar to that of Hyacinth Robinson in *The Princess Casamassima,* though he is never the sticky little *arriviste* that Hyacinth sometimes becomes. He sees his problem not merely in terms of fate but also of character: his eternal wavering, his incapacity for that passionate single-mindedness which is necessary for revolutionary activity. Nezhdanov is finally not very interesting, though he has moments of great interest; the trouble is simply in execution, Turgenev's inability to throw himself into the book which is potentially his best, both as to conception and implication.

The tiredness I have mentioned breaks out in a rough impatience with all the social classes and types of Russia—an impatience that is the result of Turgenev's increasing distance from his country and his subject. He is persistently satirical, in a not at all gentle way, about the sleek official liberals. He has a fine ear for liberal rhetoric, having himself been guilty of it on occasion. When Nezhdanov quarrels with Kallomyetsev, the reactionary who hails the Russian language as "the language of imperial decrees," their host, a comfortable liberal, declares: "Under my roof, under the roof of the Sipyagins, there are neither Jacobins nor reactionaries, there are only well-meaning people, who, when once they understand each other, are bound to end by shaking hands." This is the real thing: it rings with the true note of golden hollowness. And after he has quieted the argument, the pompous liberal "did not consciously compare himself with

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Neptune quelling the tempest; but he thought of him with a sort of sympathy."

The book has its dead stretches, but there are at least two chapters as good as anything Turgenev has done, and happily illustrating his two dominant modes. One of these turns back to old Russia, settling upon an old couple, Fomushka and Fimishka, who live like love-birds in their little house, eating old-fashioned dishes, venturing an occasional phrase in French, leafing through musty old albums, while remaining entirely untouched by ideas, tendencies, problems. The whole meaning of this chapter, in which the very words seem to shrink into miniatures, is revealed in a lovely passage: Fomushka brings out an old carved snuff-box on which it had once been possible to distinguish thirty-six figures in various postures: long ago effaced, they are still seen there by the two old folk. "The spot to which he pointed with his chubby finger . . . was just as smooth as all the rest of the snuff-box lid."

The other chapter I would single out, one of the most brilliant things ever written about the political life, captures once and for all the enlightened intellectual's effort to make his way among the masses whom he hopes to liberate and in whose name he sacrifices himself. Finally gathering his courage, the poet-revolutionary Nezhdanov goes off among the peasants, only to be met with stares of bewilderment when he urges them to "rise". Enticed into a tavern where peasants pour vodka down his throat, "Nezhdanov began talking, talking, endlessly, shouting wrathfully, malignantly, shaking broad, horny hands, kissing slobbery beards. . . ." Turgenev understood it all completely, the effort to be what one is not but feels conscience-bound to emulate: "It appears," says Nezhdanov, "when I am with the people that I am always only stooping to them, and listening. . . ." What does it matter that the Populists of the 1860's were not, as the critics insisted, nearly so ineffectual as Nezhdanov, when his experience would be repeated again and again and again?

Set off against Nezhdanov is Solomin, the practical man who sympathizes with the cause yet believes that, for the moment, it is futile. Turgenev did not quite fill in the portrait of Solomin, for he had come upon a type that hardly existed in his time and was only to flourish some decades later. Solomin is seen entirely from the outside, and while this strategy frustrates our curiosity as to his motives and intentions, it must finally be judged correct; for Solomin is not a character being portrayed, he is a character

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being anticipated. He has usually been seen as the prototype of the political gradualist, the reformer who strikes roots among the masses he would arouse. He is partly that, but he is also something else. In embryo Solomin is a Lenin type, anticipating Lenin's cool patience, his unromantic belief that revolution, being neither a gorgeous display nor a stroke of fate, must be planned and worked for in a "scientific" way. Solomin does not dissociate himself from the aims of the Populists, he merely feels them to be hopelessly incompetent. The people, he says, are "asleep" and until they can be awakened all talk of revolution is nonsense—which sounds very much like Lenin arguing with the Populists a few decades later. Solomin is quiet but his insight is very sharp, and even his irony has a tinge of Lenin. Are you ready "to go forward?" he asks Nezhdanov, and when Nezhdanov bridles at this question, he remarks, "I have no doubts of you, Nezhdanov. I only asked because I imagine there is no one ready besides you."

Later Nezhdanov has his little revenge. Solomin, he says, "does not believe . . . but he does not need to; he moves calmly forward." What Nezhdanov says is not quite true, but coming as it does from a man who can neither act nor believe, move forward nor remain still, it is a forgivable touch of bitterness. After Nezhdanov's suicide, the psychological and political themes are knitted together. Solomin and the girl who had accompanied Nezhdanov on his mission "to the people" now come together, but in guilt: they have dispossessed Nezhdanov; before his death he had already felt, both in his political fiasco and personal futility, that his manhood was being taken from him. "Why was it she did not dare now to look at Solomin, as though he were her accomplice . . . as though he too were feeling a sting of conscience? . . . Could it be, it had rested with her to save him? Why was it they had neither dared utter a word?" A little later, they come upon Nezhdanov's letter: "What could I do?" he pleads with them, "I could find no other way out of it. I could not simplify myself; the only thing left was to blot myself out altogether."

I could not simplify myself!—for this sentence alone the novel deserves to be remembered.

Turgenev, it has been said, is the one Russian writer who does not attempt to preach, who has no moral or political ideology to advance. In some obvious way this is perhaps true, yet he has very much to say to us, and very much—if a critical heresy may

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be permitted—to teach us. He speaks to us for those whom history pushes aside, for those who can neither surrender to its passions nor withdraw from its temptations. He speaks to us for the right to indecision, which is almost as important as the right to negation. He speaks to us for a politics of hesitation, a politics that will never save the world but without which the world will never be worth saving. He speaks with the authority of failure.

IV

Julian Martov was born in 1873. A restless untidy man, stoop-shouldered, hoarse-voiced and tubercular, quick and witty in speech, Bohemian by impulse and experience, Martov was one of the founders of Russian socialism. When the Social Democratic party split into Menshevik and Bolshevik wings, Martov aligned himself with the Mensheviks, though, characteristically, as leader of a left faction among them. When the 1917 revolution came, he found himself caught between the two groups, criticizing both and unable to accept the policies of either. "The moment when the balance is still oscillating," wrote Trotsky about Martov, "is his moment—this inventive statesman of eternal wavering." And with a mixture of admiration and contempt he continued: "As always at times of great historical action Martov floundered hopelessly. . . . In 1917, as in 1905, the revolution hardly noticed this unusually able man." At the Congress of Soviets immediately after the Bolsheviks took power, Martov stated his usual cautions and doubts, to which Trotsky, harsh with victory, replied by consigning him to "the rubbish-can of history." Perhaps aware that he was echoing Turgenev's description of the Russian intellectual, Trotsky called Martov "the Hamlet of democratic socialism"; despite which, Martov remained the one opposition leader whom the Bolsheviks respected. He stayed in Russia, as leader of a loyal opposition to Lenin, until the end of 1920, and then he chose exile in Berlin. In 1924, as Martov lay dying in Berlin, Lenin, who was dying in Moscow, muttered sadly, with an almost prophetic sense of historical drama: "So he too is going." The last encounter between the two extremes of Russian character, and Russian heroism, had taken place. With Martov there went the last of Turgenev's heroes, the last of the superfluous men.

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WILLIAM MEREDITH

A Korean Woman Seated by a Wall

Suffering has settled like a sly disguise
On her cheerful old face. If she dreams beyond
Rice and a roof, now toward the end of winter,
Is it of four sons gone, the cries she has heard,
A square farm in the south, soured by tents?
Some alien and untranslatable loss
Is a mask she smiles through at the weak sun
That is moving north to invade the city again.

A poet penetrates a dark disguise
After his own conception, little or large.
Crossing a scaleless asia of trouble
Where it seems no one could give himself away,
He gives himself away, he sets a scale.
Hunger and pain and death, the sorts of loss,
Dispute our comforts like peninsulas
Of no particular value, places to fight.
And what is it in suffering dismays us most:
The capriciousness with which it is dispensed
Or the unflinching way we see it borne?

She may be dreaming of her wedding gift,
A celadon bowl of a good dynasty
With cloud and herons cut in its green paste,
Asleep in a hollow bed of pale blue silk.
The rice it bought was eaten the second winter;
And by what happier stove is it unwrapped
In the evening now and passed around like a meat,
A winter foliage in the firelight?

She shifts the crate she sits on as the March
Wind mounts from the sea. The sun moves down the sky
Perceptibly, like the hand of a public clock,
In increments of darkness though ablaze.
Ah, now she looks at me. We are unmasked,
Exchanging roles we guess at for an instant.

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The questions Who comes next and Why not me
Rage at and founder my philosophy.
A guilt beyond my error, grace past her grief,
Alter the coins I tender cowardly,
Shiver the porcelain fable to green shards.

ROLFE HUMPHRIES

Llanelly Cottage

(Gwawdodyn)

A light-capped sea, and a bird-bright shore—
Whatever else was I looking for
With sun at my back, blue sky above me?
A dark-haired girl by an open door.

A dark-haired girl in a scarlet dress,
An invitation from loveliness:
Will you touch me deep, will you share my sleep,
Will you come, or keep me comfortless?

The sun at my back, blue sky above,
But over that sill who would not move?
For the light-capped sea, and the bird-bright shore
Said never a word against my love.

The scarlet dress came over her head,
Her skin was white as her silken bed:
Whisper me softly, pleasure me deftly,
Leave me not swiftly, she said, she said.

The sea, light-capped, and the shore, bird-bright,
By day outdoors are a splendid sight,
But a scarlet dress, over chair or floor,
Silk bed, and dark hair, are best for night.

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WILDER BENTLEY

Two Dreams:
Canons IV and XVII from the T'ang

The Chinese propensity for making long lists without any apparently logical order of sequence is exemplified in the twenty-four canons of the classical period of art. Hence in utilizing them as themes for poems I have been given considerable latitude in arriving at an order that would best serve the logic of my limitations as a painter and poet. Following the order given by Lin Tsiu-sen in his Meisterwerke Chinesischer Tuschezeichnungen *(Verlag, Amstutz, Herdeg & Co., Zurich, n.d.), my first four "canonical" poems, published in the Summer issue, 1954, of* The Hudson Review, *were composed to Canons II, XVIII, XIX, and XXII respectively. Of all twenty-four canons these four and the two hereunder seemed immediately comprehensible and useful to my purpose in demonstrating their general applicability to contemporary motive and scene. In the first poem essayed below,* Shimmering-breeze (T'sang-jun), *and in the second,* Hidden-depth (You-t'sui), *a relationship is established between subjective and objective reality in landscapes, East and West, while appropriate respect is paid to Yüan Chieh and Odilon Redon—two patent exponents of the value of dream-fantasy as the surface tension that holds the bubble of selfhood intact and entire without destroying either the iridescence or the translucence of man's microsphere.—W. B.*

Shimmering-breeze (T'sang-jun): A Dream of Yüan Chieh Composing near Turtle Rock Pond:

Ever since I watched him launch
His manuscript ship of fools,
Where rippling zephyrs figure bass
To Woundwort Spring's *continuo,*
The Tippling Poet of Pa Islet
Has haunted my little Stone Fish Lake.
While tottering in his cups near Turtle Rock,
With boar's hair bristle poised to scroll,

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He chronicled her fateful voyage
And wept to see her keelson rent—
Rhetorically reefed on jade and jasper—
Until she broached and foundered there:
Crew's cries and strophes silenced
By the mutterings Mount Diablo makes
In tellurian heat betimes midsummer.

Hidden-depth (You-t'sui): A Dream of the Master Odilon Redon Sketching the Estero de Limantour In Winter Twilight:

Three headlands drawn in sharp relief
Against a mountain veiled in mist,
Had left his foreground faltering.—
At length, while singing Tu Fu's lines
". . . Go to the Blue Sea, look along the shore
At all the old white bones forsaken. . . ."[1],
Where Limantour lay planished bronze
He wrought a Dionysian mask—
With gaping mouth and twin abysms
The miming sockets of a seer—
Spelling anew those oracle bones,
Whose protean glyphs beneath the brine
Revealed the depth a cobalt blue.

[1]From "A Song of War-Chariots" translated by Witter Bynner and Kiang Kang-hu in *The Jade Mountain* (New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1945).

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GUY DAVENPORT

Poem: For Lu Chi's *Wen Fu* (302 A.D.)

The fu *is an essay in verse; Lu Chi's is upon the art of writing.* So-shu, *"grass writing", is the gentleman's individualized brushing of the ideograms;* ming *is "bright". One's heron was taken out to see the plum blossoms in the dawn mist.*

Morning, cushat all a cooing, *so-shu* brusher,
Taking, mantled in mist, the crane out boating,
Looking for plum blossoms, rust in the dawn?
Ming in the black pines, damsons in a smoke!
Ah, skiff-skipper, bonneted and tucked sleeved,
Your hern hen's white as humped snow, but moving,
Han bird, out to see the plum's flower, pleased
Old heron. And you, punter, *fu* artificer Chi,
Word chiseller, line carver, and tight calligrapher,
Who called the heart's heat a bosky dragon
And a marksman archer the heart's precision,
Here's a hierogram for a heron boater's musing:
Ever see a jack wasp drinking at a faucet?
Summer garden's zinnias, Queen Anne's Lace,
Fennel, gentians, sedge grass all around him?
Words, you've said, must bring the proper colors,
And there he is, the waeps, wespe, Old Hesper Bee,
Drinking upside down, the gutta with a core of fire,
Crispy silence while he sips, pulsing with his thirst.
A bandit's soot upon his cheeks, dusk rover,
Lord he is and plunderer, too, of plum blossoms,
Precise carpenter, named for the west star Hesperos,
Rocket and Dame Violet's cousin in vespery things.
Watch the weaver, Lu Chi, at the dripping faucet.
There's a dragon still by crystal, dusk by glare,
Spiralled vigor tense but fixed in meditation,
Your prescribed control for writers at their writing.
Is that what you meant, old Sidney of China?
Out a heron boating in the dawn mist, are you,
Well, add the narrow wasp to your conclusions.

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IRMA BRANDEIS

Metaphor in *The Divine Comedy*

WRITING ON DANTE'S IMAGERY T. S. Eliot says:

> Dante's attempt is to make us see what he saw. He therefore employs very simple language and very few metaphors, for allegory and metaphor do not get on well together. And there is a peculiarity about his *comparisons* which is worth noting in passing.
>
> There is a well-known comparison in the great XVth canto of the Inferno, which Matthew Arnold singled out, rightly, for high praise; which is characteristic of the way in which Dante employs these figures. He is speaking of the crowd in Hell who peered at him and his guide under a dim light:
>
> *e si ver noi aguzzavan le ciglia,*
> *come vecchio sartor fa nella cruna. . .*
>
> *and sharpened their vision (knitted their brows) at us, like an old tailor at the eye of his needle.*
>
> The purpose of this type of simile is solely to make us see *more definitely* the scene which Dante has put before us in the preceding lines.
>
> *She looks like sleep,*
> *As she would catch another Antony*
> *In her strong toil of grace.*
>
> The image of Shakespeare's is much more complicated than Dante's, and more complicated than it looks. It has the grammatical form of a kind of simile (the 'as if' form), but of course 'catch in her toil' is a metaphor. But whereas the simile of Dante is merely to make you see more clearly how the people looked, and is explanatory, the figure of Shakespeare is expansive rather than intensive; its purpose is to add to what you see (either on the stage or in your imagination) a reminder of that fascination of Cleopatra which shaped her history and that of the world, and of that fascination being so strong that it prevails even in death.

This excerpt from the celebrated essay on Dante sheds a strong beam of light on the *Inferno,* but must puzzle the reader who tries to apply its observations generally to the *Comedy.* They seem inadequate to one's *experience* of the poem—which suggests a more various and malleable imagery. And on inspection, they fall short of the facts.

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The metaphors of the *Inferno* are indeed few, and its similes largely designed "to make us see more definitely the scene", but the *Purgatorio* is quite another story. Not only are the *Purgatorio's* metaphors numerous, but in the majority of them visual clarity and interpretative insight are there together (with a marked purpose of 'adding to what you see'), while in a few (the most striking) visible likeness drops away in favor of insight. As for the *Paradiso*, its discourse glitters with metaphors that say nothing of any visible scene whatever.

If one further studies these images in their setting along the course of the poem, one comes to feel sure that something more interesting than the individual bent of the Alighieri eyes, and more powerful than literary tradition or literary innovation, is at work here. The imagery is not predominantly of one kind, nor is it a bouquet. It varies and develops, rather, in close and revealing correspondence with the growth of the pilgrim protagonist; and this not by conscious plan, but by action of a poetic imagination which responds *wholly* to the quality of each successive moment of experience. In other words, the imagery of metaphor and analogy reflects the growth of the pilgrim's understanding in his progress from the dark wood of spiritual blindness, through gradual acquisitions of insight into universal order, to the point where he can not only "read" all the scattered pages of the "book" of the universe, but can see in a single glance the whole restored. What follows here is an attempt to substantiate this conclusion.

INFERNO

In the first canticle the principal images are explicit comparisons (similes and analogies), and the principal comparisons show us exactly what things looked like—not because it was the poet's purpose "to make us see more definitely the scene" which he had put before us, but *because to see the scene was precisely all the pilgrim in his condition of mortal ignorance could do.*[1] A narrowly escaped candidate for permanent residence in hell, he could see no deeper into the scene than the sensuous qualities by which one thing may seem to resemble another. For this reason in Inferno the meanings of things are in abeyance (the pilgrim being unable to detect them, the poet cannot overtly express them), and sensuous detail is predominantly sharp. One might say that the

[1]I am indebted to an early lecture by Francis Fergusson for observations which suggested this train of thought with regard to the action of the *Inferno*.

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quality of Dante's comparisons shows us, not the nature of his poetic imagination absolutely, as Mr. Eliot suggests, but the nature of that imagination working within the peculiar experience of hell.

The clear comparisons of the *Inferno* render nothing but what the senses might record from present or past scenes: the furniture and actions of hell and of remembered earth. But, although the pilgrim's view (to which the poet is always faithful) is thus limited, the very fact that what he had before him was a stage of *souls laid bare* would seem to promise that even the simplest tangible aspects of that world must offer clues to its meaning. *The clues were there; they are rendered in the poem.* Because they could not be read by the pilgrim when he saw them, Dante transcribes them without stress, hidden in the apparently sufficient concrete comparisons. And because they are hidden they may easily be missed by the reader; no poet ever more grandly took that risk.[2]

I would say that the comparison quoted by Mr. Eliot is one such silent clue-bearer. It describes the first meeting of Dante and Virgil with the sodomites in the darkness of their fiery circle. I quote it together with the twin comparison that immediately precedes it:

e ciascuna
ci riguardava come suol da sera
guardare uno altro sotto nuova luna;
e si ver noi aguzzavan le ciglia
come 'l vecchio sartor fa ne la cruna.

(XV, 16-21)

and each
looked hard at us as people do to see
each other at evening under a new moon;
and they sharpened their brows towards us
like an old tailor at his needle's eye.[3]

Taken by itself this passage with its two arresting comparisons would seem to intend nothing more than to delineate exactly the striving glance of the sinners—a glance such as might occur any-

[2]Only a critic could make such a remark. Dante, I am sure, neither wrote "clues" nor hoped for specific recognitions!

[3]This and the following translations are my own.

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where where light is poor and the object to be viewed somewhat unfamiliar. But it matters that this glance does *not* occur just anywhere: it happens precisely in hell, where poorness of light and weakness of eyes are conditions of the soul; and, more particularly, it is the glance of the sodomites—lovers who make a wrong identification of love's object. The pair of images that describes their glance at Dante and Virgil reflects something of their mode of being: a restless, eager, personal curiosity about the newcomer, whoever he may be. This moonlight, squint-eyed glance is our introduction to these souls: it 'adds to what we see' a preparation in feeling for the close and somewhat ambiguous personal encounter which is to follow between the pilgrim and Brunetto Latini. It "expands" the mere facts of the scene before the reader's eye.

In many other images of the *Inferno* (those especially in the favored form of analogy) one finds an expansion of similar sort. The poet whose pictures grasp the mind so strongly seldom sees merely picturesquely, and *never* describes anything for the sake of an isolated impression. The wonder of the poem is not its multifold attractions so much as its almost incredible integrity, never broken by failure of meaning or by meaning disconnected from the great divine and moral explanation of the cosmos.

The bird images of Canto V (which concerns those who "subject reason to lust") are not merely appropriate to the windy scene and the graceful crowding shapes of the sinners: they recall that perfection of instinctual living to which the lovers of the second circle—forgetting that they were creatures of reason no less than of nature—aspired. For a moment the unguarded reader, falling into hell along with the pilgrim, thinks *ah yes, of course they are like swift starlings, like singing cranes, like tender doves —poor helpless loving things, so pitiful in the merciless wind.* But he is expected to come to his senses and to realize that the tempest, which is an unavoidable accident in the life of starlings, was the choice of those human souls.

Of the itching, scratching falsifiers, who lean against one another like warming pans, we read:

> *e si traevan giù l'unghie la scabbia,*
> *come coltel di scardova le scaglie*
> *o d'altro pesce che più larghe l'abbia.*
>
> (XXIX, 82-84)

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and so their nails scraped off the scabs
as a knife scrapes the scales from bream
or other fish that has them larger.

We are in the deepest ditch of the eighth circle, almost as far from the life-supporting sun as one can get, almost in the icy center of spiritual death. The two scratchers, Griffolino and Capocchio, are seen in an image which shows us exactly what their gestures looked like, and at the same time tells us metaphorically the nature of their plight: their bodies like pans, their hands like scaling-knives, their flesh like bream or carp, humanity is utterly blighted in them; a nervous compulsion is all that animates them: the twitch of deliberate greed. As the passage develops, the images generate the horror of dehumanization—a horror curiously enhanced when Virgil, ever impeccable in honesty, addresses one of these souls as

'O tu che con le dita ti dismaglie,
. . . . . .
e che fai d'esse tal volta tanaglie,
dinne. . . . . .'

(XXIX, 85-88)

'Oh you who use your fingers to dismail yourself,
. . . . . .
sometimes making them into pincers,
tell us. . . . . .'

The major images of *Inferno* are of this kind: sharp visual comparisons with powerful metaphorical overtones. But there is another group in which the overtone of the visual works in a different way. In Canto XV, 4-12, as the pilgrim enters the circle of the violent against nature, we read:

Quale i Fiamminghi tra Guizzante e Bruggia,
temendo il fiotto che 'nver lor s'avventa,
fanno lo schermo perchè 'l mar si fuggia;
e quale i Padovan lungo la Brenta,
per difender lor ville e lor castelli,
anzi che Chiarentana il caldo senta;
a tale imagine eran fatti quelli,
tutto che nè sì alti nè si grossi,
qual che si fosse, lo maestro felli.

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As the Flemish between Wissant and Bruges
fearing the waters that come rushing toward them,
build up their dikes to put the sea to flight;
and as the Paduans do along the Brenta
to make their villages and castles safe
before Carinthia feels the heat:
so had the builder of those banks,
whoever he might be, devised them,
though not so thick and not so great in height.

The ideal reader may be supposed to know the purpose of a Flemish dyke and what it looks like, and to be familiar with the flood-barriers at Padua in Dante's time. He can, then, visualize the high banks of the crimson stream that give Virgil and the pilgrim safe foot-passage across the burning sands. But need he be reminded by *two* examples? By Padua as well as Flanders? And with a mysterious allusion to the maker of the infernal bulwarks thrown in? Surely not if *to see the scene* was all that was required. But there is something else that issues from this passage: an implicit affirmation of contrast—a forcible reminder, in the very vitality of purpose at Bruges and Padua, of the deadness of this infernal habitation and of the unnaturalness of its geography (the destructive fire replacing the life-giving waters of earth); and finally of the fact that the "citizens" here did not choose and do not know the architect of *their* dyke.

In Canto XXI, 7-18, a similar analogy describes the river of pitch in which are steeped those who bought and sold public offices.

Quale nell 'arzanà de' Viniziani
bolle l'inverno la tenace pece
a rimpalmare i legni lor non sani,
chè navicar non ponno; in qualla vece
chi fa suo legno novo e chi ristoppa
le coste a quel che più viaggi fece;
chi ribatte da proda e chi da poppa;
altri fa remi e altri volge sarte;
chi terzeruolo e artimon rintoppa;
tal, non per foco, ma per divin' arte,
bollía là giuso una pegola spessa,
che 'nviscava la ripa d'ogni parte.

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As in the arsenal of the Venetians
the sticky pitch boils in the winter months
to caulk the damaged ships
that cannot put to sea; instead
one man rebuilds his ship, another stops
the ribs of his that has made many voyages;
some hammer at a prow and some at stern;
others make oars or mend the ropes;
some patch a mainsail or a jib;
so, not by fire, but by divine art
a thick pitch boiled down there below,
and on all sides beglued the banks.

All that is actually compared here is the boiling pitch of Venetian arsenal and of infernal river. But that marvelous activity of sea-going preparation that lies between the two terms of the comparison, and which might at first view seem sheer exuberant excess, does it not at once affirm the beauty of life and stress the seasonless, fruitless nature of all doings in the abyss? That pitchy river of the barrators will be busy enough with varied activities as the canto develops, but it will serve to mend or to make nothing.

I would like to cite one more example of the contrast-stressing image before quitting the *Inferno*. In Canto XXXII, 31-36, we read of the traitors to their kin, frozen in the ice of the lowest circle:

E come a gracidar si sta la rana
col muso fuor de l'acqua, quando sogna
di spigolar sovente la villana;
livide insin là dove appar vergogna
eran l'ombre dolenti ne la ghiaccia,
. . . . . .

And as the croaking bullfrog lies
with muzzle above water, in the season
that makes the farm-girl dream of harvesting;
livid up to the place where shame appears
the sorrowing shades were fixed in ice,
. . . . . .

A strange comparison, with an effect that eludes analysis—pleasing on first reading, puzzling when thought is focussed on it, and

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even ultimately displeasing to some readers, who offer the logical objection that the two sets of terms contradict one another. The frog is, to be sure, a happy creature surrounded by his favorite element, and the peasant woman's dream is a good one—while the shivering souls are cramped in ice. But observe: once again Dante has given a good deal of imagery in excess of the actual comparison; the *stated likeness* pairs only the immersion of the frog with his muzzle above water and the immersion of the sinners with their cheeks above the ice. The farm girl, who seems to be introduced merely as a feature of the season, and who remains totally outside the stated comparison, is nonetheless very much inside and part of the whole image and its working. She and the frog together form a minute picture of tranquil summer warmth with its promise of crops for gleaning in another season. Drawn into the narrative by the slight link of the immersion comparison, they perform the true poetic action of the passage, silently affirming that in the lake of ice there are no comfortable creatures, no autumn, no harvest and no dream of fair futures.

PURGATORIO

The contrast-stressing image disappears from the poem in the second canticle, where the things seen, puzzling though they may be, are not life-parodies as they so often were in hell. Purgatory is the realm of recognition and recovery—a step by step husking off of error and acquisition of good mind-sight. The pilgrim's increasing understanding is reflected in the comparisons which more and more clearly and penetratingly point beyond what things *look like,* to what they *are like.* As in the *Inferno,* there are a number of minor similes and metaphors in which like sensuous terms are compared. There are sensuous comparisons with "expansive" overtones, of the kind discussed in the preceding section. There is a greatly increased number of simple metaphors based mainly on analogies of function and on personifications.[4] And there is, further, a small but startling group of extended comparisons with deeper and more complex interpretative insight than anything found in the earlier canticle.

[4]As when Charles of Valois is said to have caused *Florence's paunch to burst;* when judgment *garners and winnows good and evil loves;* when the penitents of the fourth terrace go *biting at sloth;* and so on.

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Quando si parte il gioco de la zara
colui che perde si riman dolente,
repetendo le volte e tristo impara:
con l'altro se ne va tutta la gente;
qual va dinanzi, e qual di dietro il prende,
e qual da lato li si reca a mente:
el non s'arresta, e questo e quello intende;
a cui porge la man, più non fa pressa;
e così da la calca si difende.
Tal era io in quella turba spessa,
volgendo a loro, e qua e là, la faccia,
e promettendo mi sciogliea da essa.

(VI, 1-12)

When the game of dice breaks up
the one who loses stays behind, disconsolate,
repeating the throws—and learns unhappily.
The others all surround the parting winner,
one snatching at his coat-tails, one in front,
another at his side, importunate.
He does not stop, and still he hears them all;
those he holds out his hand to press no more,
and this is his defense against the throng.
Such was I in that crowded gathering;
turning my face to them, this way and that,
and promising what they asked, I freed myself.

Here once more the visual scene is very strong, but manifestly it is not all the writer intends us to see. Superficially the comparison tells us that the pilgrim now sees himself to be like a winner in a dice game, moving on his way through a press of importunate onlookers, granting their requests (as his rare destiny allows), yet showing something like impatience to resume his journey so that he may enjoy his "prize". And the poet does not limit the likeness to some specific aspect of the image—does not say "so did I save myself from them" or "thus was I petitioned", but simply "such was I". This invites us to accept the comparison in all its terms. But can we? Is gaming not somewhat out of the key of heavenward journeying? And where in Purgatory is there anyone to match the disconsolate loser who opens the imaged scene? Though

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one must puzzle over this loser, it is he who eventually furnishes the key to the whole passage. So firmly drawn in the first three lines that one does not forget him when the winner takes over, he eventually leads the reader to his unmentioned and invisible counterpart in the pilgrim's journey—someone *like the pilgrim,* a player of the same game, therefore not one of the members of Purgatory at all, but another wanderer of the dark wood, staking his life on an unlikely chance—and one for whom no rescuing Virgil came. And now we know what "game" they played and why the word "game" is chosen. For the *odds stood against* the pilgrim in the dark wood; it was *a toss-up* whether he was to be saved or lost. His own will and action had brought him to that pass (as the gamester to the table) but neither was sufficient to ensure victory. Thus it was not in reward of merit, but by the mysterious operation of divine grace (the fall of the dice) that a rescuer appeared, virtually assuring the living pilgrim of his eventual prize of rebirth. *That he might not have appeared,* the image does not allow us to forget. The shadowy figure of the loser reminds us of the terrible truth that such a rescuer does not appear for every striver in the dark wood. One man is chosen, another left behind to "repeat the throws" and "learn unhappily". And no honest winner of either "game" can claim the winning number as a due reward.[5]

If the reader of this essay feels that I may be reading more into the gaming image than is actually there, I would beg him to read the passage again in context. Its meaning emerges slowly: at the pace, one might say, with which such ideas detach themselves from such experience. This comparison, if I am not mistaken, is an instance of the unexampled depth and density of Dante's art. In it he sounds a note of pride in the haste and assurance of the prizewinning pilgrim and a counternote of profound humility in the implied awareness of the loser's equal right. Lines which at first seem a mere passing sharpener of pictorial clarity, hold the clue to that synthesis of impersonal life-pride with personal humility which the pilgrim is only to achieve along with the final goal of his journey.

I will be brief with the metaphors of the *Purgatorio,* citing only two typical examples—one relatively simple, the other com-

[5]Dante is perfectly clear throughout the poem that grace rather than any personal virtue has brought about the pilgrim's rescue and elevation.

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plex.[6] Visual clarity is no longer of moment in them; they require interpretation, and they, in return, interpret the pilgrim's condition of quickened insight. With the very different final metaphors of the *Paradiso* in mind, I should like to stress the point that these are analytic in nature; however instantaneously the mind may work to grasp them, however deeply it may read them, it does so by logical breakdown of subject and image. For this reason analysis on the reader's part can, where at all called for, hope to do the greater rather than the lesser job of clarification.

When Beatrice upbraids the pilgrim for his earlier wanderings from her (XXXI, 2-3) the harshness of her words is expressed in

> *volgendo suo parlare a me per punta*
> *che pur per taglio m'era paruto acro.*
>
> *turning her discourse pointwise towards me,*
> *which even edgewise had seemed sharp.*

How speech can be a sword we can grasp only through interpretation; the image says nothing intelligible to the eye. Beatrice's speech, then, is piercingly sharp because it reveals a truth now become grievous; thus it is no less sharp when its touch is indirect (turned edgewise, as it had been a moment earlier in Beatrice's account of the pilgrim's "fall" to the pitying angels) than when pointed towards the victim. The metaphor 'adds to what we see' a lesson in the role of love, and newly characterizes the beauteous beloved. Beatrice is like Christ: she is an avenue of love and, though supremely merciful, a merciless sword-bearer.

Canto XIX, 61-67, gives a metaphor of a different order, followed by a twin analogy. Virgil has just explained to his bewildered pupil the nature of his siren dream, with its danger and its attraction. He adds:

> *'Bastiti, e batti a terra le calcagne:*
> *li occhi rivolgi al logoro che gira*
> *lo rege etterno con le rote magne.'*
> *Quale il falcon, che prima a' piè si mira,*
> *indi si volge al grido e si protende*
> *per lo disio del pasto che là il tira;*
> *tal mi fec'io . . .*

[6]Let the reader who doubts that true metaphors are numerous in the *Purgatorio*, or that they are interpretative, examine some single canto and take count. In the one with which we have just been dealing (the sixth), for example, he will find metaphors in 37-8, 44-5, 76-9, 88-96, 112-14, 130-33, 142-44.

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'Let this suffice. Now strike the earth with your heels
and fix your eyes again upon the lure
which the eternal king spins with the great wheels.'
Like falcon which looks down, first, at the ground,
then, turning towards the call, springs into flight,
hungering for the food that draws him there;
such I became . . .

One does not grasp the meaning of the first triplet until one has read the second, which makes it clear that the pilgrim is being likened to a falcon, urged to take flight from his earthbound preoccupation and to follow the "lure" of his true goal, the upper heavens. The man-falcon metaphor of this first triplet is present by implication only, in the series of commands. There is no visual likeness to support it. Dante has been walking slowly upward in the pass that leads from the penitents of sloth to those of avarice; he is gazing at the ground, thinking of the awful deception within his dream. It is just this that Virgil wants to break through—this dream-bound movement of a man who is awake and is on Mt. Purgatory. Impatient, Virgil tosses him a three-line explanation of the dream (its content of false vision and corrective), and then, with "let this suffice", scolds him into being a falcon. But it is not flight alone which this bird image suggests—nor merely upward glance and motion such as Virgil urges on the pilgrim. The poet has chosen the falcon rather than any other bird because the trained falcon (an indispensable accessory of the mediaeval hunt) has learned to shape its instinctive behaviour to the service of a master, hunting as another and greater hunter wills. All the terms of the metaphor (61-63) unfold when the analogy (64-66) throws this light back upon them. The pilgrim is urged to take upward flight ("strike the earth with your heels") like a homing falcon, in response to the will (the "call") of the "king", who is God, who is the pilgrim's falconer. The king calls him with the "lure" (in falconry the word refers to a pair of simulated bird-wings used to attract the hunting bird back to its starting point) of the highest revolving heaven. Thus the passage repeats a theme that runs throughout the poem: man's goal is at the same time his point of departure (the soul's source) which forever beckons him back. And it suggests that God's will neither compels obedience (the falcon need not return to the hunter's wrist) nor does it require distortion of the creature's nature: the faculties man

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is asked to use are the best of those he was born with and the goal proposed one that offers "food" to his "hungering".

PARADISO

Again the nature of the place determines the language of comparison. Or seems to; for what place is it, really? No "place" at all—or, if you like, eight heavenly bodies, encased in concentric crystalline spheres, and two empty crystalline spheres, of which the outermost only is the proper abode of the blest.[7] As "place" the heavens are like so many movie-screens which serve as temporary projection centers for an essentially spaceless reality. In this they are unlike the circles of Inferno and the mountain of Purgatory which are there and are functional on the literal level.[8] Furthermore, the whole experience of Paradise, with the exception of the final (uncommunicable) vision, is itself a series of metaphorical appearances. This important fact is made clear by Beatrice (XXX, 76-81) where she invites the pilgrim to drink from the empyrean river, the last of the many symbol-masks under which he has viewed reality, in order to dissolve that final disguise and see the real reality. Paradise is beyond space and time; its sights and events are merely educational concessions to the pilgrim's mortal condition, helping him to grasp by analogy what he cannot grasp directly: the nature of pure being, free from all becoming, from all contingency. Says Beatrice:

> *Così parlar conviensi al vostro ingegno,*
> *però che solo da sensato apprende*
> *ciò che fa poscia d'intelletto degno.*
>
> (IV, 40-42)

> *Such speech suits the condition of your mind*
> *which only from the senses learns*
> *what it then proffers to the intellect.*

In other words, because he is still incompletely "transhumanized", the pilgrim must be taught through the old avenues of sense and the old mode of absolute individuation. To see with the mind's eye and to see the universe as one, is the ultimate goal. The pilgrim has come all the way from the world of discrete, self-bounded

[7]Cf. IV, 28-39.

[8]Not an altogether accurate statement. It would perhaps be better to say that in the first eight heavens literal space begins a kind of withering away which is achieved in the ninth. See XXVII, 109-11.

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things to the edge of the heaven of unitary being—from fragmentation and chaos to the doorstep of wholeness and harmony.

If the metaphor is truly a revealer of relationships, bridging categories in order to point out likenesses hitherto unperceived, the showers of metaphors in the *Paradiso* (like all proper members of the species) may be said to play their part in the final goal—namely, the bringing together of the fragments of a whole which the world continually shatters. And, since the pilgrim in Paradise is no longer restricted to seeing the accidental and impermanent qualities of things, one would expect him to grasp, not only likenesses within the concrete sensuous world, but others bridging the distance between the concrete and the abstract, between the real and the imaginary, and still others between purely conceptual entities. All these we find.

As one might foresee, concrete sensuous likeness plays a diminished role in the *Paradiso*. (In the first ten cantos there are not more than eight metaphors and comparisons based truly on sensuous likeness.) Because the poet ascribes no final reality to the space and time of this realm, his imagery, like his narrative, must lead away from the concrete reference and the analytic view toward the suprasensual and the unitive. By the time we reach Canto XVIII, where the souls of the just are seen as lights forming the figure of an eagle and spelling out a biblical motto in sky-writing, appearances *qua* appearances are absurd. We are not to stare at them; we are to take them as clues, alone—clues to the nature of that which human minds cannot see without visual aids: the varieties of heavenly being. And so, when that eagle prepares to answer the pilgrim's questions and we read:

> *Quasi falcone ch'esce del cappello,*
> *move la testa e con l'ali si plaude,*
> *voglia mostrando e faccendosi bello,*
> *vid'io farsi quel segno, che di laude*
> *de la divina grazia era contesto,*
> *con canti quai si sa chi là su gaude.*
>
> (XIX, 34-39)

> *Like falcon liberated from the hood,*
> *who shakes his head and claps his wings,*
> *showing his will and making himself beautiful,*

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so moved that standard woven all of praises,
for grace divine, with songs
such as are known to the rejoicing souls above. . . .

there is nothing (or worse) to be got from a sensuous comparison of the terms, either of the analogy (like falcon . . . so that standard) or the metaphor that springs from it (standard . . . woven of praises); whereas interpretation yields not only a deep insight into the joyousness of the response, but a glimpse of the perfect unity of these souls, who appear as one thing, respond as one, and are woven of one uniquely spiritual substance. Once again the peculiar relationship of the trained falcon—for whom the hunt is a requirement of his own nature—to the master in whose service he is sent forth ("liberated from the hood"), serves Dante to express the soul's relationship of free subjection to God.[9]

The falcon passage is typical of the major group of comparisons relating two concrete terms. Comparable to it are those to be found in I, 49-54; IV, 115-116; X, 139-148; among others. In all, the substance or the actions of Paradise are likened to earthly substances or actions so that the pilgrim may make his approach to them; but it is an unfamiliar, un-lifelike concrete that we see here, in a text that drives us constantly toward the comprehension of essences. The reader cannot rest in the concrete Paradise, for it contains no recognizable shapes or familiar behaviour. Nor does the poet want him to rest there.

There is a further extremely large group of comparisons and metaphors in which concrete *images* are paired with abstract *subjects*.[10] In the first two cantos, fifteen out of twenty-one metaphors seem to me to be of this variety, having such subjects as *motion, reason, wonder, desire, wisdom, order, being, providence*, etc. The effect of these is to reinforce the substantiality of ideas—an essential trait of Paradise. I quote three examples from this group:

. . . . . *ciò procede*
da perfetto veder, che, come apprende
così nel bene appreso move il piede.

(V, 4-6)

[9]Cf. remarks on the falcon image of *Purg.* XIX, above.

[10]In separating the two essential terms involved in metaphor, I designate as *subject* the term denoting what is to be characterized, and as *image* the term denoting that with which the *subject* term is identified.

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. . . . . this comes
of perfect vision which, as it apprehends,
puts forth its foot into the apprehended good.

O insensata cura de' mortali,
quanto son difettivi sillogismi
quei che ti fanno in basso batter l'ali!

(XI, 1-3)

O foolish cares of mortals,
how blundering those syllogisms are
that make you downward beat your wings!

Però ne la giustizia sempiterna
la vista che riceve il vostro mondo,
com'occhio per lo mare, entro s'interna;

(XIX, 58-60)

Such vision as is granted to your world
in the eternal justice penetrates
as does the eye into the ocean's depths.

And finally there is the somewhat smaller group of astonishing analogies where neither *subject* nor *image* is drawn from the concrete:[11]

Tu credi che a me tuo pensier mei
da quel ch'è primo, così come raia
da l'un, se si conosce, il cinque e 'l sei;

(XV, 55-57)

You judge that your thought comes to me
out of the primal mind, as from the one,
if it be known, ray out the five and six.

. . . come veggion le terrene menti
non capere in triangol due ottusi,
così vedi le cose contingenti
anzi che sieno in sè, mirando il punto
a cui tutti li tempi son presenti;

(XVII, 14-18)

[11]Both the immediately following quotations concern the nature of heavenly seeing; the first is spoken by the pilgrim's ancestor, Cacciaguida, to his descendant; the second by the pilgrim to Cacciaguida.

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. . . as earthly minds perceive
two obtuse angles will not fit the triangle,
so do you see contingent things
before they come to be, fixing your gaze
upon that point to which all times are present.

So much for clear categories. But there are metaphors in the later cantos of the *Paradiso* which make nonsense of classification. For example, these words of the just souls—following their reminder that God, as the very ground of man's idea of justice, cannot himself be unjust, however much the brevity or obscurity of human sight may tempt man to suppose him so:

Lume non è, se non vien dal sereno
che non si turba mai; anzi è tenebra,
od ombra de la carne, o suo veleno.

(XIX, 64-66)

There is no light except from that serene
which never clouds; all else is darkness
or shadow of the flesh, or else its poison.

And these of the pilgrim when he looks round at Paradise after his professions of faith, hope and charity:

Ciò ch'io vedeva mi sembiava un riso
de l'universo . . .

(XXVII, 4-5)

That which I saw seemed to me a smile
of the universe . . .

And finally these of Beatrice concerning the last of the symbol-masks under which the pilgrim must view the heavenly host:

. . . . . Il fiume e li topazii
ch'entrano ed escono ed il rider de l'erbe
son di lor vero umbriferi prefazii.

(XXX, 76-78)

. . . . . The river and the topazes
that plunge and rise, and the laughter of the grasses
are shadowy prefaces of their reality.

These three royal metaphors, terse statements of essential mo-

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ments in the progress towards Paradise-wisdom, derive their *images* from flashes of intuitive clarity and imaginative synthesis so sharp and unified that logical analysis is quite beside the point. Such images, indeed, lightly and happily contradict the logic of intellect in a way Dante, I think, would never have tolerated in the first two canticles, which are reason's realm.

It is not that one cannot make rational sense of these passages if one cares to try. But at best such an attempt can merely show us how better to focus our thought on the original words, which embody a synthesis incapable of paraphrase, a perception grotesquely altered by any change. The first of these passages, if we read it in context, affirms that all seeming "light" other than that of God, is a false semblance; it names three varieties of such non-light: darkness, shadow of the flesh and "poison" of the flesh. Darkness *which is taken as light* may well be the condition of the intellect without aid of faith; shadow of the flesh may be the obscurity cast by pride, greed and lust across what otherwise might have been viewed in true light; and "poison", the more deadly emanation of the actual deeds of pride, greed and lust. But Dante does not ask us to think about what these terms denote; we have passed through the realms of darkness and flesh-shadow in his poem, and now need merely allow these terms to expand in the mind. To the best of our individual capacities to understand them, we will do so through the images and associations they call up. In other words, nothing is to be gained here, no further penetration achieved, by analysis.

Nothing like this is to be found in the *Inferno* or in the *Purgatorio*, where a certain exactitude of reference is the norm and where generally both terms (subject and object) of metaphors are drawn from realms of man's daily experience—one being used literally, the other figuratively. Here one might say that both terms are figurative; for the false light or lightlessness implied in the subject (the "it" which is "no light") is no more a physical illumination than the "darkness" of the *image*. Or one might perhaps venture the very opposite, upon suspicion that in this equation of two "figurative" entities we have actually passed beyond metaphor and emerged on its far side in a new simple equivalence, within a world where all light is spiritual.

I will not labor this last; but were Dante's intention of that

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kind, it would be merely one further matching of the pilgrim's vision to the high goal of the journey which, above all, has educated his eyes. In the illusory solid Infernal world he "saw the scene"—no more; in Purgatory he saw meaning within the ordered scene and in the visions of the imagination; in Paradise his glance has passed beyond the scene altogether, has passed the symbolic as well as the literal masks, and finally has come to rest, simply and immediately, upon essential being.

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SHIRLEY FREISINGER

To a Foetus Miscarried

(For S. B.)

Wanderer from your orient of half-development,
Louvred eyes never to open on our light,
Cocoon with fingers' threads too silken-slight
Ever to tangle in our harsh occident,
Quince, the summer of your parents' bed meant
You to be the pear of their consumed delight,
How from the hothouse womb did winter's blight
Unfruit you, hard little stone of half-intent?

Diver you seem who never found his pearl
And must undine dead-seas of a doctor's jar
Where schools of sinuous eyes outside swirl
By your anchorage. Is there specimen in far
Heaven of your soul, God's unaborted pearl,
Or are you as nature's flotsam as we are?

"Scintille, diamant..."

(from "Contes d'Hoffmann", by Offenbach)

Kaleidoscope of feminine all-desire,
Oh diamond, sibyl that leads my blind hand
To the world, do my fingers understand
How death will rake them over while you are fire
Still? Why should this hand, dredged up from the dire
Mine of years be set in death's square marriage band
While, like a virgin of purpose, you command
A somewhat eternity for your chaste fire?

Hard-faced wonders of the world, you outstare death
While I, less precious than I came, must go:
A bead cut off from worthless string of breath.
Immortal in daylight as I may be,
Must I scree the dark canyon incognito
With no collet of love to receive me?

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WINTHROP PALMER

Ballet

The tulips open their mouths and say "Do".
The sky rolls back, lights come up, Spring
Enters laughing, arms overhead, on toe.
One turn, she has the old men remembering,
Young lovers roving with eye and hand.
While roofs shine, trees tremble and the roads swing.

At the Christening of Fall

The wind came in person kicking a village
Dead as a dog out of the way.

The bay sloshed through the hall
And waltzed off with the grand piano.

What did you say when the window fell in your lap?
The pond screamed in the language of wild duck.

Target

Prodded by trees the empty sky
Releases a sudden bird.
Now the claws of winter have ripped a paper ceiling.
Do you mind the snow?
Fire rules the province of July,
A red sun enters the sea,
The moon hangs an orange hoop in the locust.
How pale and still the mornings are—
They scarcely breathe.

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ELDER OLSON

The Cry

Martin, the telegram trembling in his hand,
Walked out upon the porch; went down the stairs.
He heard her call out, "Anything from Johnnie?"
But for the moment could not speak; suddenly
He had to sit, or fall; so he sat down,
On the last step.
Strange—at such a time—to notice
A butterfly. Just out of its cocoon;
It lay upon a sun-warmed stone, moved feebly
Wings that in minutes, doubtless, would unfold
To full perfection; a thing so delicate
It was difficult to think that the same power
That made the enormous suns had made this too,
Done more than that—equipped, adorned it, even,
As if all God's care and labor since Creation
Had been to build and cherish this one thing.

Suddenly a jay swept down, and had it.

Martin leapt up, brain ringing with the cry
The butterfly might have cried out; the huge scream
Echoed and re-echoed without end
Since first the stronger pinned the weaker down,
Ages back, in the awakening slime:
The cry of horror and agony, the fierce indictment
Of the Creator by the created thing
Tricked into a universe of fright.
He felt within his breast that bitter cry
Bubble up like blood. He uttered it.

The Altar

I found the ruined altar in the glen,
Nearly returned, now, to brute natural rock.
A bush blazed on it, like an altar-fire.

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A shrine cast down as by an enemy;
Its coronals and garlands broken away,
Its columns fallen, shattered; all as if
The only carvers had been wind and rain.

A bitter token: that faith, that labor spurned.
I stood remembering how the robed priestly waves
Chant in strange processionals, and the wild earth
Year after year renews mysterious rites
To powers that make no covenant with man,

Gods barbarous and implacable, that destroy
Even what we would consecrate to them,
And only in shrines made pure of us at last
Place for themselves a proud offering of their own.

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GEORGE P. ELLIOTT

Miracle Play

In my sixth year I learned to my wonder that there was an invisible world perfect with the one I saw.

I awoke on the morning of my sixth birthday, not to the strains of Happy Birthday, not to my Mother's kiss, not even as usual to the sound of my Dad in the bathroom singing as he shaved 'Where is the child? for I am Herod thy king'; I awoke alone and late, hearing Granny's heavy foot in the hall and the clank of basins in the bathroom. When I came out, she told me in a cross voice to hurry with my dressing and then go outdoors to play. When I asked her why, she told me not to bother her, Mother was not well, and she gave me a whack on the bottom that wasn't for my birthday. All I had for breakfast was an apple. After breakfast I went out, and found tadpoles in a bucket. I took one up to Granny to see, but by the time I'd reached the first landing of the stairs she'd run down to me; she made a hissing noise when I showed her the tadpole, and cuffed my ears and said I was bad. A cuff is only a cuff, but I'd never been cuffed on the head before, or if I had been it hadn't made much difference; I went into the parlor to be alone and lick my tears. I vowed not to go out till they came for me, and if they never came I'd die there of hunger on the horse-hair sofa where I had no business being. I hadn't been bad, or good, or anything else. I'd just wanted to see my mother, and wanted to know what was the matter that I couldn't. I sat on the slick sofa quite straight; I thought for a time of putting my feet up to spite Granny but I decided I wouldn't for fear the spite would hurt Mother more. The blinds were not quite down, and through the cracks I watched the sun go out and the heavens darken for a summer storm.

And then—I'm not sure when but a little before the storm broke—I heard Dad humming on the porch. When he opened the front door he was singing in his deep voice 'For I am Herod'. Mother had told me he was practising to be Herod in a Christmas pageant at church; but since I did not know what she meant by a pageant or by Herod I just listened to the songs he sang. He worked on the railroad at that time and would be gone for long stretches; he'd never been home so early in the day as this. I ran

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to the parlor door ready to jump to him in the hall, but then I heard Granny call from the kitchen "Henry?" and I remembered where I was. I watched them, through a crack I made in the doorway, as Dad asked her in a low voice all sorts of questions I could not grasp. Granny was steaming and billowy, wisps of hair lay on her left cheek, she kept rolling her hands up in her apron. Dad was Dad.

"And where's the boy?" he said.

"I haven't been seeing him around for a while," she answered. "He was getting underfoot."

"We mustn't leave him out. He's afraid of thunder and lightning."

"Oh lord, he is," she said impatiently.

"And besides," said Dad, "it's his birthday today."

She threw up her hands, sighed "With all I've got to do," and went back to the kitchen.

What was there for me? As soon as she was gone I flung open the door and caught him with one foot on the stairs.

"Daddy!" I cried. "Daddy! I want to see Mother!"

His hands were raspy on the backs of my legs as he picked me up, and his beard hurt my cheek, and he smelled of sweat and pipe smoke. "Just let me go say hello to her, my boy, and see whether she can have you."

She couldn't. He told me she was dozing. But then, whatever Granny might say to the contrary, he carried me up to Mother's door and let me peek in at her with the white sheet up to her chin and her hair all loose on the pillow.

He held me during the storm, singing to me.

A doctor came while it was still hailing and stayed for a short time.

I thought two or three times I heard Mother cry out; Dad didn't seem worried enough. Then, once during a lull, I knew I'd heard her and began crying myself. He told me that she was not sorry to be in pain, so we must not cry. But I thought he was just comforting me, and as I lay in his arms crying I gave myself over to hating Granny with all my heart. I was sure that she was responsible one way or another for Mother's hurting and that Dad simply did not understand. To myself I called Granny the Old Hag of the House, and I wished passionately that she would get locked up in the closet under the stairs till she was dead.

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As soon as the storm had passed, Dad took me to the barbershop and for a birthday present had my hair cut for the first time by a barber; I was very proud. Then he took me to Aunt Rebecca's to stay till he should come for me; I couldn't go back home till a big surprise should be waiting for me; he winked as he said it; I wondered why. When he kissed me good-bye I told him I loved him.

Aunt Rebecca was Dad's older sister, very tall, and I'd heard people say she was afraid of men because she had a purple birthmark on her face and throat. Maybe she was but that day a dandruffy, out-of-town man named Nathan, with whom she laughed, came by in a touring car and drove us into the country for a picnic. They were kind to me, but their real talk was only to each other. He kept saying what a character she was, and though I didn't know what he meant I knew she did not like being called it, and I loved her jealously. The grass was wet. They were stretched out on a blanket in the sun. I went off by a brook to play. When I was squatting behind some bushes, they kissed. I was astonished to see them do it, for Nathan's feet didn't go much farther down than Aunt Rebecca's knees. I stood up to watch but they kept on kissing and laughing away. I was ashamed of their rudeness and went off by myself. Yet, on the ride home, Aunt Rebecca held me in her lap and talked only to me, or sang under her breath a song I'd been hearing her practice, 'This babe a crown doth wear'; when she said good-bye to Nathan, she did not shake his hand or even look at him, but thanked him 'for the nice time' in the way you don't mean it.

After a while she took me home. On the front steps we met the doctor again.

"Well, Harvey," he said, "how do you like the idea of a twelve-pound baby brother?"

He smelled of medicine. I didn't know what he was talking about.

"How is everything going?" Aunt Rebecca asked.

"Fine, everything's fine and dandy." And he pushed a lemon drop into my mouth.

There was a baby in the house all right; I could hear that squeaky noise babies make. When Granny said so, Dad carried me up to Mother's room. Mother was very pale but she smiled at me and held out her hand; Dad leaned me over and she kissed me on the forehead and patted my hair.

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The baby was asleep tucked under her arm. His name was Jimmy. I thought it particularly outrageous that he should already have a name. Granny said I must get out and leave Mother in peace with the baby.

Some time later I was again sent off to stay with Aunt Rebecca, this time because Granny was sick. Next morning Dad came for me, took me on his knee, and told me that Granny had passed away to a better world and that I must be very careful with Mother. Aunt Rebecca said she would bake a spice cake for our dinner, she had to do something. As soon as Dad and I walked in the door of our house, Mother grabbed me and burst into sobs that alarmed me into tears.

Next afternoon I was told to go alone into the parlor to look at my Grandmother for the last time. In the parlor, it felt chilly on the hottest day; the casket was sleek as a piano and lined with pink satin; the air was dripping with the odor of flowers; I was very solemn. Her face was not the same: broader, smoother, pinker on the cheeks. I would not have known her but for the mole on the side of her nose. I touched her hand, and nothing happened.

It occurred to me that, if this was really Granny though she looked so changed, then Jimmy might be changed too from what he really was. Maybe he was really a little pig; he looked as much like a pig as this Granny looked like the Granny I had always known. Mother had said that God had given us Jimmy and now she said that God had taken Granny; yet here Granny was; so where had Jimmy been before God had given him to us? Probably in a pig-pen. Mother and Dad had both told me that Granny was happier now than she had been in life, in this vale of tears, Dad called it; but neither of them acted as though they believed what they'd said, especially Mother, and the expression on Granny's face was very stern. I tried to make my face as stern as hers, but as I stood there stiff as a soldier I began to feel my heart beating in my neck, and I was seized by the fear I might blow up if I didn't start breathing again. I panted till I was dizzy.

Only one thing was I clear about: I felt the opposite of what everyone else was feeling; just as I was sorry Jimmy had been born, I was glad Granny had died. I felt neither proud nor guilty about this, but only wondering; to be sure, I hid signs of my contrary, imprudent emotions.

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Aunt Rebecca sang at Granny's funeral. She wore a long black dress with a white lace collar, and she sang Nearer My God to Thee and The End of a Perfect Day. She stood facing the casket as though she was singing to Granny; but I knew that Granny was in heaven listening to the angels' music; perhaps the angels sounded like Aunt Rebecca. Afterwards, everyone said how beautifully Aunt Rebecca had sung and how lovely she looked. The way she was standing we could see only the right side of her face, the unafflicted side. I hardly knew her.

By December life seemed to be getting satisfactory again. It's true Mother paid me much less attention than before, most of the time, and often she looked sad, when she was thinking of Granny; but since I was off at school a lot, it wasn't so bad; besides, Dad had taught me to read already, and I often read Bible stories while she was ironing. Jimmy improved; he was fun to play with once in a while; he laughed at me and liked to grab my nose; he began to look less like a pig and more like Mother. Dad was Dad.

Then the Sunday before Christmas Dad went off right after supper, and Mother took Jimmy next door to stay with old Mrs. Shipley, and she and I bundled up and went off to church. I had never before been to church in the evening; the only light was from candles; where the pulpit had been stood a tall plush chair; on the other side, in front of the choir seats, was an old-fashioned cradle and a stool. The piano was not in sight, but from behind a curtain of sheets on a wire came piano music. Nathan was sitting in front of us, by himself; he didn't notice me and I didn't tell Mother I knew him. The church was full.

The three wise men came out and sang how far they had come to see the child that was to be born. Someone came and told them the king wanted to see them. I was very excited because these wise men were really members of the church whom I saw every Sunday and often around town during the week; the thin one was our mailman. Yet they seemed taller than usual, larger in every way, and their beards astonished me. The next thing I knew they had gone to see the king on his throne, the tall chair, and the king was my Dad. "Herod!" they sang. I gasped. I leaned against Mother, who put a finger to my lips and said it was only Daddy. It was as much as I could do to keep from crying out to tell him to become my Dad again, but Mother's hand was right on my shoulder ready to clap over my mouth; I made no noise.

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For he wasn't only my Dad, he was Herod too. His voice was deep, he wore king's robes, he was taller than all the rest, his eyes were dark and fierce. Dad was trusting and warm, but Herod was full of suspiciousness and hate. Dad was kind to any dog or cat, but Herod said with a dreadful sneer "Thou cur" to a servant. Dad loved me and spanked me only when there was nothing else to be done, but Herod ordered all the first-born men-children to be put to the sword. After he had sung this order to his soldiers, there was a thunderous drum-roll from behind the curtain.

I was used to the thought that everyone had a soul, and I was used to God as I was used to loving and being loved; I had always more or less assumed that, though I'd never seen a soul or God, in Heaven souls and God would all see one another. Nothing unimaginable was.

For several minutes I was a jelly of terror. Mother knew nothing of it, for she only patted me idly from time to time, watching the play.

The next thing I knew, Aunt Rebecca in a long white gown and with sparkling jewels in her hair was singing to Mary that her babe should be crowned the Savior of the world. The robe, as I knew, was really a double-bed sheet which Mother had been helping her sew on the day before, but when she stretched her arms out to Mary on the stool, I was sure this was how the angels appeared. I heard Nathan sigh; he shook his head a little; I liked him better; he didn't think she was a character now. There was an invisible violin playing the melody along with her as she sang; I had never heard the like before; it was other-worldly.

Yet, though she was standing so we could see her whole face, birthmark and all, she was—everything was—so beautiful I had a falling away feeling in the stomach.

My terror awoke while the shepherds and wise men were adoring the blessed doll, for I remembered that Herod's soldiers were at that very moment looking for this first-born to kill him. Then, at the end as I listened to the invisible angel, visible Aunt Rebecca, warn Mary and Joseph to flee to Egypt where the child would be safe, I realized that it was far more important that these people had done what they had done, and that God had wished it so, than that actually they were church members and my family. The beauty was as great as the terror. All of us sang Noël.

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WILLIAM BECKER

French "Style" on Broadway

IT HAS BEEN REPORTED THAT at a conference during the recent visit of the Comédie Française to New York, a brief but illuminating exchange passed between a member of the Actors' Studio and Jacques Charon. "How," the young actor is said to have asked, "do you go about creating *style* in acting?" To which the gifted *Sociétaire* reputedly answered with aplomb, "Why, you just *feel* it." Now since "feeling" one's role is the very essence of Actors' Studio "Methodism", and the results to date of this method are the very antithesis of "style" in the high French sense, such an answer could only have created the most appalling confusion. Yet the question itself has some significance in the current scene. For the badge of anti-Stanislavskyism, of "style", of technique, of so-called classical acting, is being flaunted with increasing frequency these days by younger actors and directors.

Unfortunately, for the most part, the loudest of these partisans tend not to be among the most gifted of the younger professionals. There is, among them, a heavy admixture of Theatre Guild flatulence, of snobbery, of anglophilia—and withal, a foolish contempt for the very real achievements of the best American acting. On the school level, the American Academy of Dramatic Arts and the new Shakespeare Festival Academy, both under the control of Theatre Guild people, are high-mindedly committed to furthering the craft of classical acting. But the program in practice seems to be a purely reactionary one of anti-Method work, and even considering the fact that few students of any great promise are enrolled in either school, the consequences so far are nauseating. One finds in their occasional public performances that the stress on diction chiefly results in phony English accents; on refined movement, in outlandish posing; on elevation and stylization, in plain incredibility. The whole "style" camp, for the moment at least, is the soft and flabby underbelly of the trade.

Yet even within the Actors' Studio, which remains the most substantial repository of young acting talent in this country, there is a growing sense that their methods have been inadequate to many kinds of plays; and there is evidence that this dissatisfaction is already beginning to impel a broadening of horizons, both as regards dramatic material on the one hand and technical preparation on the other. Moreover, since television, which gives most young actors their livelihood, has responded to the Age of Anxiety by adopting the mood play of neurotic family life as its stock-in-trade, the tendency in the private studios, where serious work is done, to escape from that mould is likely to be strong. To sort out the linguistic misunderstandings which hobble dis-

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cussions of acting technique among professionals—even to unravel the difference between Charon's kind of "feeling" and that of the average Method actor—is subject matter for another essay altogether. The important thing is that there are forces at work which, even while inarticulate, show great promise of forcing some new frontiers. The recent inflation of interest in writers like Anouilh and Giraudoux is not accidental and should not be overlooked. Even the creation of the Shakespeare Festival in Stratford, Connecticut, whatever its temporary character, is altogether good; for its very existence as an opportunity will inevitably evoke some new responses from the profession.

Thus, questions concerning high "style" in acting—what it is, how to prepare for it, when it is applicable—are likely to assume considerable importance for the current generation of actors. What has not yet been sufficiently recognized is that "style" in the theatre is only partially a matter of technique. More basically, it involves an approach to technique itself, a different way of looking at plays. What is now wanted from directors is a stronger concentration on the play as an artifact, and from actors a deepened interest in the role as a role. Which is not to say that what has already been achieved—in character study, in genre painting, in emotional intensity—should be discarded, but only that its excesses be modified and its range expanded. There are things which American actors can do superbly that few European actors can do at all. And the aping of certain European mannerisms—which is what most of the "style" camp means by technique—will lead us nowhere. Presumably what we want is an American classical theatre, not a second-hand European one. And to get that, we will need our own disciplines, rooted in such existing strengths as we have, and adapted to our own climate and tongue. More than anything else, what American actors can learn from European ones is, not technique, but a new set of elementary concerns about theatre—and mainly a concern for *performance* as such, for the play as play. The current Fall season has provided some splendid opportunities to witness such concerns in action—and, all things considered, they could not have arrived at a more appropriate time.

I

Performance, as an end in itself, does not come in purer doses than in the delicate art of pantomime. And there are surely few performers anywhere in the world, even among pantomimists, more dedicated to a deliberate act of sheer performance than Marcel Marceau, who stunned critics and audiences alike with his recent limited New York engagement, and subsequently stole the show from Maurice Chevalier on an NBC TV Spectacular. No words, no music, no scenery, no props to speak of, no supporting actors; merely one man, alone on the stage, in a single conventional costume and white face, under strong unchanging lights—performing. "I try never to give the audience a chance to relax their attention enough to be critical," Marceau once told me. "A compelling per-

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formance is an unbroken succession of compelling moments. I must make the audience react to me each moment, and I am sensitive, like a hunted animal, to that reaction." Such is the credo of one of the most brilliant of living performers. When Marceau generates the kind of bristling electricity in a theatre that one ordinarily associates only with feats of high-wire daring at the circus, it is no mere momentary happenstance; it is the calculated and quintessential aim of his art.

Marceau's program here was divided into two parts, the first modestly called "style pantomimes" and the second built around his own special character, Bip. He begins with a series of technical exercises, the first of which, *marcher sur place,* or walking in place as if on a treadmill, is the most elementary of mime movements. Barrault made it famous in the *Baptiste* pantomime in *Les Enfants du Paradis,* and every pupil of Etienne Decroux (Barrault's mime *maître,* and also Marceau's) can do it. Yet in Marceau's rendition, it achieves what in poetry would be called "perfected utterance", not merely by virtue of his extraordinary technical skill, but because Marceau also contrives to suggest something of the will behind the simple act, to humanize it, and thereby to convert a technical exercise into a little drama of walking. And so the first half of the evening proceeds—through increasingly intricate exercises and comic sketches. There is a man on one end of a tug rope, a man trying on clothes at the tailor, a man in a dice game, and so on—some rounded little dramas in themselves, others rather indistinct in character from the Bip items of the second half, but all meticulously conceived and exquisitely performed. Two of these style pantomimes, however, stand apart from the rest. One is a sort of tone-poem, called "Youth, Maturity, Old Age, and Death", in which Marceau unfolds from a kind of foetal position, and in a constant flow of movement, suggests a whole cycle of life, refolding at the end into death, signified by a trembling hand that suddenly goes limp at the wrist, and falls. The other, called "The Public Garden", is an exceedingly complex panorama, depicting a broad cross-section of life on an afternoon in the park. Here Marceau—again in an uninterrupted whirl of movement—sketches perhaps a dozen people—a balloon-seller, a child and his mother, a policeman, a woman with a dog, some passersby—weaving gracefully from one character to the next and back again, with amazing clarity and economy, creating little incidents between them, and in deft, incisive, often broadly humorous strokes, seeming to people the whole stage at once. These two pieces represent a kind of work which is unique with Marceau, and is, in many respects, closer to certain highly disciplined Oriental forms of dance drama than to anything in Western tradition.

Bip is a character vaguely analogous to Chaplin's tramp. At least, Marceau is fond of referring to him as "Charlot's little brother". Actually, Bip is much less of a piece than Chaplin's tramp; and, except for the battered top-hat with a tall sunflower in it, which is Bip's trademark, there is no great difference between many of the sketches which Marceau does as Marceau and those he

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does as Bip. It is true that Bip and Charlot share much of the same general inspiration—a mixture of sentiment and absurdity, of laughter and tears, the comic hero on the verge of pathos or tragedy—but this is no more than the Pagliacci myth, the perennial clown theme: and some, for example, of Sid Caesar's best work shares it too. What sets Marceau apart is not his material or his inspiration, but his style, which is entirely *sui generis*. The perfected character of everything he does pushes him continually in the direction of dance, and thus imposes a specifically lyrical quality on nearly all his work. The extremes of this tendency are evident in a work like "Bip and the Butterfly" where the movements of the chase are so deliberate and attitudinized that one is almost tempted to speak of *arabesques penchées* and *attitudes*. Yet the abstract edge is taken off this danciness largely by the work of Marceau's hands and face. In "Bip and the Butterfly", the climax comes as Bip holds a wounded butterfly on his palm, indicating the beats of its wings with a spastic flexing of his hand, his face full of apprehension and guilt. One of the least lyrical, and funniest, of the Bip works is an outlandish *tour de force* called "Bip plays David and Goliath" in which Bip alternately appears on either side of a screen in the center of the stage. One moment he is little David skipping happily about playing his shepherd's pipe; the next, he is a Gargantuan Goliath, seemingly nine feet tall, striding heavily around the stage. As the contest gets under way, these alternations take place with increasing rapidity, until finally one finds it hard to believe that there are not two people involved, and the audience is racked with laughter.

Marceau is under no compulsion to be constantly renewing his material. Part of the perfectedness of his work must be due to his having had most of his prize pieces in his repertory almost from the beginning, which was less than ten years ago. In Paris, what impulse he has for new composition is mostly directed into larger works for his company, with which he has less success than he has alone. And while the perennial polishing and tailoring of his solo works has given him extraordinary command, it has perhaps also had the defects of its virtues. For if there is one thing in the general tradition of this sort of work which one misses in Marceau, it is an element of brutality, of harsh grotesquerie, of true satire; and this is an anti-lyrical thing which the tendency toward dance, deriving from his perfect control, tends to make unavailable to him. It is in this sense that Marceau's art and his style are not merely coterminous, but practically identical. One feels this deficiency more urgently, of course, in his group works, partly because they have a larger social context, and partly because none of his group can claim anything like Marceau's own virtuoso stage presence or technique. Yet, whatever limitations it may have, what Marceau has achieved is already of major importance; and the dedication, the discipline, the sense of performance which this achievement represents, could teach us almost all we need to know about what "style" is in the theatre and how to go about finding it.

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II

In a previous article in this space, I wrote at some length about the current repertoire of the Comédie Française, taking special note of the degree to which the Commedia dell'Arte tradition, with its emphasis on pantomimic elements, has reasserted itself in both the repertoire and the interpretations of the Comédie. A portion of this enormous troupe has now made its first visit to the United States under the joint sponsorship of Sol Hurok and the French government. The visit was, on the whole, a success—though less of one, I think, than it might have been, had things been handled differently.

For one thing, the repertory of five plays was rather oddly chosen, and by no means represented the best of the Comédie's current work. It consisted of Molière's *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme*, Marivaux' *Arlequin poli par l'amour* and *Le Jeu de L'amour et du hasard*, Beaumarchais' *Le Barbier de Seville* and Musset's *Un Caprice*. To have brought two Marivaux plays and only one Molière is perhaps less of a distortion than it might seem, considering the importance of Marivaux to the Commedia tradition in France and hence to the currently predominant programme of the Comédie. But no attempt was made in the publicity to establish that importance for an American public, and the rest of the repertory did little to explain it. The Musset curtain raiser, for example, was quite out of that tradition, being an ordinary nineteenth-century drawing room comedy, of some charm, but no particular relevance. One of the Musset proverb plays, like *On ne saurait penser à tout*, in which Jacques Charon has one of his most brilliantly hilarious roles, would have been much more to the point. As for *Le Barbier de Seville*, it seemed to me an inferior production altogether. No director was credited, and the assumption is that it was simply one of those handed-down items in the old perfunctory Comédie style of which remnants still exist. There were no modern works, no foreign plays, and no real farces. Yet something by Feydeau, and, say, Pirandello's *Six Characters*, which with Ledoux and Maria Casarès is an outstanding masterpiece, would have given a much more accurate picture of the current company at its peak.

Still, the strengths of the Comédie, of which I have already written—its brilliant stylistic resources, its technical disciplines, its incredible vitality, its consummate attention to details of costuming, music, and scenery—were, of course, very much in evidence in all the work, most particularly in the Marivaux plays and the ensemble of *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme*. But I gathered that they made less of an impression on professional circles in New York than they should have, considering current dialectic between "style" and Stanislavskyism. The feeling seems to have been left that there was too much "prettiness" and too little real substance in the Comédie work. Even discounting the portion of criticism that undoubtedly derived from certain defense mechanisms having been set in motion, there is some justification, on the basis of these productions alone, for such a view.

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Probably the most genuine basis for criticism along these lines was provided by Louis Seigneur's performance of M. Jourdain. For while the rest of the production is among the most brilliant in the whole Comédie repertoire, and worth seeing for Charon's portrayal of the dancing master alone, everything of intellectual interest in the play finally depends on Jourdain. And Seigneur's Jourdain is merely an amiable bumbler, with all the maniacal drive of Molière's social climber left out. It is an amusing performance in its way, and full of charm, yet it remains flaccid and quite unreal in a way that no amount of "style" can compensate for. Jourdain, ironically, is a role, like many of Molière's big individual portraits, so rich in human substance and emotional depth, that some measure of what one might call Stanislavskyite preparation is entirely appropriate to it. Now there are actors at the Comédie thoroughly capable of such depths—Ledoux in *Six Characters,* Jean Chevrier in *Le Misanthrope,* Jean Marchat in *Tartuffe*—but Seigneur is unfortunately not among them. And since nothing else in the repertory offered any opportunity for a big weighty performance, Seigneur's inadequacy proved a tactical failure of some importance.

III

Yet, if "style" is now the thing that American actors want to add to their equipment, France is the place to look for help. The classical theatre in America has been corrupted for years by its connection with England, for the identity of language is no asset, but a major obstruction, to independent development. Moreover, there is not an actor in England who can claim the discipline of so much training and such a variety of stage experience as any one of the Sociétaires of the Comédie Française, who, according to their publicity are prepared to perform a different program every day for five years. Even the best of the English classical actors, like Gielgud and Olivier, tend to be physically gauche, and all of them are in love with the sound of their own voices. Nor can England claim a sustaining tradition as rich and unbroken as can France: modern Shakespearean production in England has a history that is less than fifty years old. In many ways, American theatrical disciplines are richer and more full of promise than anything in England, except perhaps in literacy. But in the best that modern France has to offer—in Marceau, in Barrault, in the Comédie Française—flower all the seeds we have yet to plant: a knowledge of what to do with the body as well as the voice, a flair for the purely theatrical, a profound joy in the nature of performance itself, a sense of belonging in the direct line of a proud heritage. And perhaps best of all, if we look to France, no American actor should ever again be tempted to say "bean" when he means "been".

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VERNON YOUNG

Umberto D.: Vittorio De Sica's "Super"-naturalism

SOCIOLOGICAL FILM CRITICISM IS forever mistaken because it is forever misled —on humanitarian principles or by self-righteousness or from color-blindness— into confusing ends with means. Asserting that importance lies in subject matter, it fails to recognize that no subject is important until awakened by art; assuming (to give its charity the benefit of the doubt) that love is greater than art, it fails to acknowledge that the art *is* the love. Vittorio De Sica's new film, *Umberto D.* (new here—it was released four years ago) provides a characteristic opportunity for confused judgment. To praise the film for its human appeal is as needless and as miserly as to praise a beautiful woman for her conspicuous virtue.

Umberto Domenico Ferrari or Umberto D., as he prefers to call himself, is a retired civil-service clerk living alone on an inadequate pension and, as the film opens, facing eviction from a furnished room which, as ghastly as may be, is the only place he can call home. His sole companion is a mongrel dog, Flick. To maintain their precious, if contracting, haven (the landlady has taken to sub-renting his room to transient lovers while he is out), the old man joins other aged pensioners in a demonstration (unsuccessful) for higher allotments, sells his gold watch and his dictionary, tries to beg but is unable to support the shameful resolution, engages in frustrated transactions for boarding the dog or giving it away, and finally attempts suicide by standing in front of an oncoming train with the dog in his arms. Flick, in panic, escapes and Umberto D., trying to recapture him, saves himself. The film closes on the old man trying to regain the dog's trust in a deserted park, with an occasional train speeding by.

So rehearsed, the film may easily be construed as an artless and unbuttered slice of life, a testimony of "naturalism": ostensibly a method of expressing reality without inhibition, without overtones and as far as possible without style. Nothing could be further from the case. Like *Shoe Shine* or *Bicycle Thief*, and with justification even more subtle, De Sica's *Umberto D.*—a masterpiece of compassion which he has dedicated to his father—might be termed *super*-naturalism if this compound had not been preempted for another kind of experience entirely. The fidelity of De Sica's attention to the plight of the man, Umberto, realistic in its living details, is enriched by a host of modulations working under and through the story line, so delicately registered as to be imperceptible save to that second awareness evoked from most spectators without their being able to define it. Cinematically created, these modulations

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are not arresting, since they accumulate from thematic relationships in the scenario. De Sica's use of the camera is clear-eyed, rather than ingenuous. As in his other naturalist films, his cinematographer (in this case G. R. Aldo, the same who was bewitched, with De Sica, into assisting David Selznick's Florentine hoax, *Indiscretion of an American Wife)* is not called upon to exhibit striking angles or movement: De Sica's compositions rarely startle one by their ingenuity. *What* he focuses on at a given point is more significant than the *way* he focuses. The way is never neglected, it simply isn't exploited; for it is to De Sica's purpose to move with un-elliptical life as closely as he dares without vitiating motion-picture technique altogether. To subordinate the essentially cinematic as he does is itself a technique of ineffable skill; and to efface his signature as a director from the style of a film argues a modest purity of aim.[1]

In *Bicycle Thief,* De Sica developed the film's rhythm by a *pas de deux* of man and boy in their scouting expedition through the city, the boy nervously anxious to keep in time with his father's mood and intention. The adjustments of temper and of tempo, the resolution, the haste, anger and embarrassment, the flanking movements, the frustrations and periodic losses of direction: these constituted a form of situational ballet which gave the film its lyricism. There is no such springy movement in *Umberto D.*; the quality of its form is established otherwise.

The possessive theme is Time; its epiphanies are sounded in a scale of variations. Before even the credits have appeared on the screen, the bells of early Mass ring out as the pensioners gather in the street. After they have been dispersed by the carabinieri, Umberto D. offers his watch for sale to an acquaintance, murmuring his own pride in its workmanship with an imitative "tick-tock, tick-tock". As this scene is succeeded by one at a restaurant, where he resumes his attempt to sell the watch, the background noises of dishes and spoons seem to take up the clicking pulsations of time. Thereafter a tap dripping, footsteps, voices saying goodnight below Umberto's window, his alarm clock, the musical score itself and bells of one kind or another maintain this rhythm and reminder of the irrevocable. When, at the deepest moment of his despair, after he has failed to beg or borrow, Umberto D. returns to his room—already breached and dismantled for the landlady's new domestic arrangements—the clock ticks more loudly; it is virtually the only sound we hear besides

[1]Since writing this article I have attended screenings of I VITELLONI (1953) and LA STRADA (1954), directed by the emergent Federico Fellini; these films, which I hope to discuss in a later issue, are equally distinct examples of methodical naturalism transcended, although in the former the seemingly unrehearsed configurations of daily life, poetically wrought, never quite combine in that stricter unity of realism and allegory that underlies UMBERTO D. and distinguishes, sublimely, LA STRADA. Fellini was co-scenarist of ROMA, CITTA APERTA ("Open City"), and other Rosselini-made films, scenarist of SIENZA PIETA and co-director of LUCI DEL VARIETA, unseen here to date. Before 1953 his purest claim on the future was his scenario for THE MIRACLE (starring Magnani), in which he personally appeared—as the silent goatherd-seducer.

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the old man's breathing. . . . Intent now on self-destruction, he inquires first about boarding the dog. The haggling of the couple with whom he tries to deal, conducted in that fulminating rhythm of the back-street Roman, is intercut with a ferociously barking mastiff—the voice of all the world that opposes Umberto's need. He turns away, with Flick still unprovided for, and his retreat is mocked by a housewife who has flipped a carpet over her window-sill, which she then beats at a measured, doom-like pace. Time piles up. A beggar chants plaintively, "Signora! I have two children . . . Signor! I have two children". As a well-dressed woman ignores his appeal, he repeats the plaint like a warning, between savagely clamped teeth, "SIGNORA! I HAVE TWO CHILDREN!" . . . Streetcar and railroad-crossing bells rattle and jangle. Umberto D. makes his futile attempt at self-extinction and is left with his problem as the train catapults by.

Sound, which is time, is always extraneous to Umberto D. It impinges; it does not involve him. The clatter of social life is beyond the fringes of his consciousness; he hears it but it isn't speaking to him. Maria, the landlady's adolescent servant-girl from the country, is ever ready to respond as far as her own preoccupation will allow, but she is pregnant (by whom she is not sure) and fearful that the landlady will find out and discharge her. With eyes misleadingly alive, she seems forever on the verge of communication with the old pensioner, only to escape into her private world of ignorance and fright. And Umberto D., on his side, is as incapable of saying the words that would unite them in their misery. (Beyond an ineffectual reprimand to one of Maria's 'seducers', he operates within the circumference of his own pain.) As he lies in his bed, sweating, anxious, sick and alone, the landlady, her friends and her preposterous suitor sing pompous operatic choruses in the sitting-room. Music, badinage, whispers and coarse laughter announce, without reassurance, the life of others.

Visually the narration is equally cogent, taking in without appearing to emphasize the incongruities, the excrescences, the implacabilities of life at a level of civilization where the meretricious and the ugly are accepted or suffered, where in fact the vitality of a people cut off, by a superimposed culture, from its native modes, expresses itself by choice through a corrupt aesthetic. At the house of Umberto D.'s landlady the camera, with flat-lighted neutrality, exposes the importunate vulgarity of middle-class Italian decor: the mock-Imperial wallpaper, the cut-glass, the lambrequins like shrouds, the fringed table-scarves and (most horrible item of all!) a lamp in the form of a Grecian nymph, with naked light-bulbs sprouting from it. (The stilted terrors of the family photograph album.) There are some remarkable instances in this film of De Sica's sparing use of a background object as *direct* symbol. The old man's coat hanging lifelessly on a gigantic stand which looks like a monstrous under-

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water growth is analogous to the social situation in which man is an unbraced, drowning remnant in the ruins of a cheaply florid dream of empire—and when Umberto D. returns to his room the last time, a shot of the hallway gives prominence to a stuffed falcon among the bric-a-brac. The most impressive *vis-a-vis* is depicted in the painful scene of Umberto D.'s tentative rehearsal of begging (during which he tries using Flick to cover him until the humiliation of being encountered by someone he knows forces him to the pretense of teaching the dog a new trick). An overpowering classical column, cracked at the base, is the backdrop for this joyless act.

De Sica's balance between the lifelike and the cinematic is tenuous; if he had actors less responsive to the naked untheatricality he is commonly after, his muted formalism might suffer from the risks he takes. But he can afford to dwell at length on the faces and motions of Umberto D. and Maria precisely because Carlo Battisti and Maria Pia Casilio are sentiently, gravely, inside life. (Neither is a 'professional'. Where, but in Italy, can one find so much unconscious histrionic talent?!). Few directors could manage, without losing their hold on the continuity, the beautiful cadence in this film where the coming of day is enacted through the actions of Maria as she gets out of bed. The scene is wordless, leisured and almost unbearably intimate. There is little in it that could not be performed on a stage, but in its brief duration and its breathing nearness, in the particular placing of the camera for each view of the pregnant girl struggling to experience joy which gives way to fear and then to a daydream indifference, it is a marvel of movie timing and perspective.

Maria, while subordinate to Umberto D., is by an inspired implication complementary. Neglected youth and discarded old age. The girl and her involuntary burden-to-be; the man and his voluntarily assumed burden, Flick: girl and man subservient to the loud concerns of society, exemplified by the middle-aged landlady who is handsome in a brassy way, venal, pseudo-respectable and heartless—living in a world of opera, ormolu and broken-down technology. In *Shoe Shine* the horse was a symbol, if you like, of the unattainable, a dream of power and freedom. The bicycle in *Bicycle Thief* was an occupational necessity which became a projection of the man's self-respect. Flick, neither ideal nor economic necessity, may be felt as representing the last thing a man will surrender: it is the love in the man, Umberto.

When De Sica and Cesare Zavattini (who wrote the story from which, with De Sica, the screenplay was shaped) avoided the easier termination, of suicide accomplished, by ending the film on an inconclusive (which is not to say indecisive) note—Umberto D and the dog gamboling under the cedars—we can be sure they were saying very clearly: Life sometimes leaves you nothing but love, and in your deprivation and anguish you cannot bear to support even such a burden. But this is your only identity and until the day you die you must

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not put aside the little humanity left to you. . . . Umberto D. tries to entrust the dog to another; he tries to give it away; he tries to destroy it. In the end he is still, as our idiom says, "stuck with it".

Birth quickens in the unclaimed Maria; the venal landlady marries a fool; Umberto is homeless but keeps his pet. De Sica's films in the naturalist vein have been accusations of the Fascist aftermath; they take their place with the most profound cinematic achievements by sounding vibrations in a dimension larger than the political. . . . When Umberto D. twirls down the path under the trees with the jumping dog, we recall not only the other De Sica 'conclusions'—Pasquale, in *Shoe Shine,* facing a lifetime of expiation; the frustrated 'bicycle thief' and his son renewing the life-circuit by joining hands; the poor, of *Miracle in Milan,* flying away on their brooms to an unlikely heaven—but also perhaps Baptiste, in *Les Enfants du Paradis,* striving against the tide of revellers cutting him off from Truth, the woodchopper in *Rashomon,* undaunted by fearful disclosures of moral ambiguity, deciding to adopt the abandoned baby—and Chaplin disappearing into a California horizon (the *first* time!).

Reviews

WYNDHAM LEWIS

Perspectives on Lawrence

IT IS IN ONE SENSE a favorable circumstance for a reviewer that both Lawrence of Arabia and his debunker, Richard Aldington, are well known to me. It may also be considered a handicap. But that I am unable to agree with Aldington regarding the victim of his critical attack[1] can hardly be regarded as unfriendly.

I first saw Colonel Lawrence on my doorstep after he had scaled my gate, which I had locked, one fairly dark evening. I supposed he had gained admittance in this way in order to present me with a bill, and when I asked him very roughly who he was, holding his head down he whispered "T. E. Lawrence". After that he frequently visited me, as Aircraftsman Shaw, at the end of one of his long motor rides from one or other of his camps. I remember on one occasion he told me that General Allenby wished to propose him to the government

[1]LAWRENCE OF ARABIA. A Biographical Enquiry, by *Richard Aldington.* Regnery. $5.00.

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as Governor of Egypt, or he may have said High Commissioner. This was one of Lawrence's "lies" according to Aldington, who says that he invented this story, to impress bombastically whoever it was he favoured with the tale, which, in Aldington's book, is described as totally without foundation. I asked Lawrence, at the time, why he did not accept. His answer was that if he found himself in the judgement seat, and some man, no matter who, in the dock before him, he would always feel that he should be where the accused was, and the accused in his position, as judge. Looking back on it, this answer seems to me now a somewhat theatrical one, but I cannot believe that Lawrence invented the story just to impress. As I read this in Aldington's book I felt sure that he was mistaken in citing this as an example of Lawrence's fantastic boasting.

In Aldington's book we learn that it was this claim by Lawrence to have been offered this particular job which caused him to write his debunk of Lawrence. "This (little episode) first aroused my suspicions of Lawrence's veracity and led me to find proof after proof that much he reports of himself—including and especially his Arabian experiences—was heightened, exaggerated, faked, boastful and sometimes entirely without foundation" (p. 381). These are Aldington's words; and it may therefore be assumed that all the other falsehoods that he tracks down are of a similar kind. So for my part, I am prejudiced against this book from the start, because I do not believe that this particular episode is what Aldington represents it to be. What I believe is that the question of this appointment had been discussed with Lawrence by Allenby (as he mentioned to me) and others; and however imprudent it may have been for Lawrence to speak of this privately to his friends, that it was not an "example of a systematic falsification and over-valuing of himself and his achievements" (see Aldington's Introductory Letter). Before the end of Aldington's massed attack on Lawrence of Arabia I was glad to find a foot-note as follows: "Sir Winston Churchill has since affirmed that although he never offered the post of High Commissioner to Lawrence officially he may have talked over the possibility of his being offered it unofficially with Lawrence." Although Sir Winston was at that time at the Colonial Office, and it was not in his power to appoint Lawrence High Commissioner of Egypt, nevertheless his office was a high one, and he would not be speaking idly if he discussed a possibility of that kind. The fact was that national politics in Egypt were in a dangerous state, and Lawrence probably did not want to find himself in Cairo, representing England, at a time of violence. He would be expected to act with great severity; but he was the Friend of the Arabs, and so would be put in a very difficult position. His account of the matter to me, quoted above, probably referred to this predicament. Had we been sitting in a restaurant, and had the people at the next table overheard this rather small and shabby man announcing that he had been offered Egypt but had refused it, their reaction would certainly have been that of Aldington, namely, that he was telling a

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ridiculous lie. It is my opinion that he was doing nothing of the sort. From my personal knowledge of him, I am sure he would not have been capable of such a vulgar boastfulness. But the whole image of T. E. Lawrence, as created by Aldington—of one who was not only a pushing young particle, but criminally dishonest—does not correspond to what I saw. Whatever else he was, Lawrence was not a common little boaster; he was too intelligent to go round the town making up stories about himself.

There are many incidents in Aldington's book which depend, for their destructiveness, upon a rather inferior condition of mind. For instance, Lawrence's real name was not Lawrence. His father was an Irish baronet, Sir Thomas Robert Tighe Chapman, the seventh baronet. This gentleman left his wife and daughters in Ireland, and lived for the rest of his life under an assumed name, Lawrence, in England, in the company of a children's nurse of Scottish upbringing. It is difficult to determine what her name was, but it was not Lawrence. These facts, with a great deal of clamour, are revealed by Aldington in his book. If a man is unable to marry a woman he finds he loves better than his wife, is debarred from seeking a divorce, and, relinquishing his identity, lives with this second woman under an assumed name, that does not seem to me in any way disgraceful. The traditional bastard, as represented in Shakespeare's plays, would no doubt have had hard feelings regarding his position. But it is hardly likely that a young man living a middle-class life in North Oxford, would "suffer" in the manner suggested by Aldington upon learning that had he not been born out of wedlock he would have had a father belonging to the minor nobility.

However, out of this discovery of his, Aldington builds up a psychiatric case about Lawrence, the idol of the Crowd, the Prince of Mecca, and all the rest of it. He asserts that all Lawrence's life was distorted, that he never ceased to wish to inflate himself until he might grow to be the social equal of the baronet whose legitimate son he was not; that this caused him to descend to the most shameful tricks, to tell the most ingenious lies, so that Col. Lawrence might become a legend and be able to strut about as an historic figure, with his gold dagger stuck in his golden belt. This golden dagger, by the way, is an object of the darkest suspicion to Aldington. When did Lawrence obtain it? Is what is said true, that he slipped into Mecca and ordered it to be made to his own design by a goldsmith named Gasein? No, he thinks; as practically everything that Lawrence said was untrue, it must have some other origin—was it Hashemite gold, melted down from 150 captured Turkish sovereigns? No, again, says Aldington. For he suspects the Hashemites as much as he does their paymaster—"the main source of the Hashemite gold obviously was the lavish British subsidies" (footnote, p. 223). So with all the other gold scattered about his person, such as the bindings of his head-rope that was explained by Lawrence as follows: that "he put all his pay into the show". Aldington will not allow this, but believes that the British tax-payers' money was used for his adornment.

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To show how it came about that Lawrence and his bodyguard practically swam in gold, Aldington quotes certain books to show in how rich a soil his suspicions have grown. First is the Army List, 1918, from which we gather that Lawrence had at the time an independent credit of 300,000 pounds, as well as the rank of Lieutenant Colonel, and the D.S.O. With this solid economic background he began the life of an "Anglo-Semitic chieftain". "In those days," we are told, "every tribesman had sovereigns knotted in his clothes"; and the coast towns "were glutted with English gold". Any smaller chieftain that Lawrence wished to reward was told to plunge his hand into a bag full of sovereigns and keep as many as he could carry away. This method, he claimed, was economical, since the Sheiks thought it the last word in splendour, but it never cost more than one hundred and twenty pounds. Lawrence had bags of gold to the amount of thirty thousand pounds which he took to Zeid at Tafileh. Returning a little later he found that all this gold had evaporated among a group of lesser chieftains—which was, I should have thought, what it might have been expected to do. It is, apparently, vouched for. But let me here say that there appears to be no evidence of Lawrence keeping bags of gold for himself, or certainly we should have heard about it.

The nearest parallel to Col. Lawrence were the great leaders like Clive whose reputations have come under violent attack. For the first two years of the war Lawrence was in an office concerned mainly with the making of maps, and he never officially became a soldier, although they made him a Colonel, and decorated him with the D.S.O. All this reminds one of Anglo-Indian history. In Arabia he was surrounded by professional soldiers of great ability, like Dawnay and Young. He did, at Tafileh, conduct a purely military operation—Headquarters thought very brilliantly—and he received a D.S.O. for it. But it had none of the efficiency of Dawnay's action at Tell Shawn. Exactly what it was that gave Lawrence his great pre-eminence it is difficult to define.

His assumption of Arab dress was a very important factor. I asked him once if he spoke Arabic perfectly, and he answered "No, only 'kitchen arabic' ". But this kind of Arabic was precisely what served him so well, and undoubtedly he was preparing himself for his glorious career during the war by his archaeological experiences at Carchemish and elsewhere 1911 to 1914, as an undergraduate. During that period he made several journeys in the company of a young Arab named Dahoum, and in the excavations he spent a good deal of time with the Arab workmen, and was reported to have picked up much Arabic. This is no doubt where the 'kitchen arabic' came from.

If a person is anxious to learn a language, it has often been said that there is no better way of doing so than by forming an illicit relation with some woman of the country. Now, among many things that Aldington has found to help him blacken Lawrence with, there is one charge which I, for one, would not dispute; namely that Lawrence had homosexual tendencies. The Arabs at Carchemish were of opinion that Lawrence's relation with Dahoum was a homosexual one. Unpleasant as his habits were in this respect, one is bound to

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trace back to his familiarity with Arab workmen, in undergraduate days, his successes with Arabs in general later on.

Sir Leonard Woolley asserted that the homosexual charge was unfounded. But he would be unlikely to admit that about anyone whom he regarded as a promising archaeologist. It is interesting to note, in a letter of Lawrence's of March 1912, how it was he, because of his command of Arabic, who acted for his chief in all matters where it was necessary to know the language. Here is a passage in which he apologises for being so bad a correspondent; he says, "You will allow for the amount of work that falls on one with Woolley a stranger to the country . . . I have to act interpreter for him always, though he is fairly fluent in Egyptian: I have to do the bargaining, and keep the accounts" (*Home Letters of T. E. Lawrence*, p. 196).

Let me say, in concluding the homosexual question, that the evidence of his oldest friend, Vyvyan Richards, contradicts that of Sir Leonard Woolley. Richards definitely says that he has always noticed how Lawrence was attracted by youths (see Vyvyan Richards on T. E. Lawrence, *Great Lives*). If it could be proved that the dedication of *The Seven Pillars of Wisdom* "To S. A." was in fact to Sheik Ahmed, or Dahoum, as Aldington claims it is, this would be very powerful evidence of Lawrence's sexual perversion. For Dahoum died during the War. Here is Lawrence's dedicatory poem:

I loved you, so I drew these tides of men into my hands
and wrote my will across the sky in stars
To earn you Freedom, the seven pillared worthy house,
that your eyes might be shining for me
When we came.

Death seemed my servant on the road, till we were near
and saw you waiting:
When you smiled, and in sorrowful envy he outran me
and took you apart;
Into his quietness.

Love, the way-heavy, groped to your body, our brief ways
ours for the moment
Before earth's soft hand explored your shape, and the blind
worms grew fat upon
Your substance.

Men prayed me that I set out work, the inviolate house,
as a memory of you.
But for fit monument I shattered it, unfinished: and now
The little things creep out to patch themselves hovels
in the marred shadow
Of your gift.

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The words "To earn you Freedom" indicate that this is to an Arab, and we may rule out the idea of a female Arab.

Next there is his main piece of self-expression, *The Seven Pillars of Wisdom*. I do not agree with Aldington about the shortcomings of this book. I like it better now than I did at first; it seems to me very well written, and what is more important, in considering it in connection with Aldington's attack, it is very free of any of the kind of insincerity that a reader of Aldington's book would expect to find. Lawrence even displays great modesty in the manner in which he refers to the part he is playing in this military drama. Here is one passage, in which he and Dawnay are visiting Headquarters. "Seeing the undress working of a general's mind . . . was an experience; technical, reassuring, and very valuable to me, who was mildly a general, too, in my own odd show" (p. 553). Here is another instance. Lawrence was deeply dispirited by the misuse of the thirty thousand pounds worth of gold sovereigns left with Zeid. His bodyguard dispersed, he rode across country with four camels near British Headquarters. There he found his great friend Hogarth. He explained to him why he had come. "I confessed that I had made a mess of things; and had come to beg Allenby to find me some smaller part elsewhere. I had put all myself into the Arab business, and had come to wreck because of my sick judgment."

If Allenby had found for him some less important part, then there would have been no Lawrence legend. No one has spoken more disobligingly of Lawrence's achievement than Lawrence himself in the lines I have just quoted. Allenby, however, showed no weakening of his confidence in him, and thus confirmed in his great trust, Lawrence returned to the Arab levies. His own comment on the way the matter had turned out was as follows: "I must take up again my mantle of fraud in the East. With my certain contempt for half measures I took it up quickly and wrapped myself in it completely. It might be fraud or it might be force: no one should say that I could not play it." These words are anything but boastful.

There is no sign either of his inflating the record of his adventures, to suggest that he had been responsible for more than was the case. He takes you step by step across the desert, and shows no inclination to invent exciting episodes. More often than not the narrative is uneventful, and a less serious writer would have invented this or that in order to relieve the montony.

It seems to me, also, that a careful reading disposes of the long belittlement of all his feats as "Uncrowned King of Arabia," as "Prince of Mecca" and so on. Apart from his lack of judgement regarding the question of the gold given to Zeid, and other key leaders, he handled the Arabs perfectly in a number of difficult situations. When the battle turned against the English, Jemal Pasha having entered Salt, and the Turks chasing Allenby down the Jordan Valley in a retreat that must have had the look of disaster for Lawrence's camelmen, he succeeded in steadying them and falling back in good order.

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This is only one example of his influence on the Arabs—for the donkeyboys like Dahoum, whom he knew so well, were exactly the same kind of man as the camelmen, and if you understood one *à fond* you understood the other.

I have not spoken of something of great importance; namely, Lawrence's ambition, in freeing the Arabs from Turkish imperialism. I do not suppose, during his first visits to Arabia as an undergraduate, that any idea of this sort existed. But from the moment that he approached the Hashemite princes, proposing to them England's assistance to liberate them from the Turks, the ideal of Arabian emancipation never left him. He did not wish to go with a false promise of freedom to the Arabs, and persuade them to fight the Turks —to rebel against the Turkish Empire—and then find that they had thrown off one master in order to submit to another, imperial boss. Slowly he became aware of the treachery that he was being guilty of. From then on he began regarding England askance. When the end came, and he and his Arabs had entered Damascus, he asked General Allenby for permission to lay down all authority and to leave Arabia. And his impulse to join the Air Force, and offer himself for the most humble forms of duty, was understood to be a comment on the betrayal he had been led into while holding a relatively exalted rank.

We realise all the hatred aroused by debunkers, and what considerations produce these feelings. But I know Aldington well enough to feel quite sure that the pain his book would cause to the mother of this fabulous man is an issue which would never be present to him. I have good reason for seeing Aldington as a man capable of very generous actions. But his eye is a barrack-room eye, and he quite genuinely feels, I am sure, that Lawrence has secured that glittering military prize cheaply; that there was a lot of showing up to be done, and that he was just the man to do it.

He is not the man to see the Hero. He sees that the commonest soldier is a hero; this he celebrated in his best-known book, *The Death of a Hero*. Sir Winston Churchill has a different way of seeing things and he saw in Lawrence the outline of one of the greatest destinies. "The War," he said, "stopped too soon to satisfy Lawrence's destiny." Here is what he says. "I have often wondered what would have happened to Lawrence if the Great War had continued for several more years. His fame was spreading fast and with the momentum of the fabulous throughout Asia. . . . No one could say what was impossible. Lawrence might have realised Napoleon's young dream of conquering the East; he might have arrived at Constantinople in 1919 or 1920 with most of the tribes and races of Asia Minor and Arabia at his back."

Lawrence's valour has never been doubted even by Aldington. So this small man with the large head, the "Oxford aesthete" who had read all the standard books of military science and was full of ideas of Arab Freedom, was one of the world's most romantic captains, one most originally endowed. As for his sexual perversion, he had a deplorable model in Julius Caesar, a war-lord of the greatest fame. The same strange feminine intermixture in Lawrence's nature

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caused him to adopt the becoming Arab costume, and so become one of the most picturesque military adventurers in European history. Lawrence summed his own life up excellently. It took the form of an epigram. "I was an Irish nobody. I did something. It was a failure. And I became an Irish nobody again."

He meant of course, that the Arabs got nothing out of their Revolt in the Desert. It is an excellent epitaph on a career.

★

From the perusal of nearly 400 pages of T. E. Lawrence's letters[2] an intimate knowledge of his youth and young manhood may be derived. All the early letters are almost purely architectural. He was exclusively interested in castles and churches; and for many pages the reader of these letters will clamber over Norman and other castles, noting the structure of machicoulis, the numbers and positions of latrines, and the height of towers. For years this was all, apparently, that interested Lawrence—the result of possessing for a father a baronet masquerading as a commoner. Wide as were his architectural interests, if one had to say what in detail was his favourite subject, one would be compelled to answer Mediaeval Plumbing.

A very good instance of this is to be met with at the beginning of the book, page 4. He is then still sixteen years old, and has gone to Norwich with his father. He writes about his brother Will's disappointment that he leaves unvisited a superb collection of birds. "There was the largest collection of raptorial birds in existence, 409 out of 470 species: I wonder if he [his brother Will] will shriek with horror when he hears that I did not look at them but went off and examined the Norman W.C.s." Here you have, brutally underlined, while he was still a school boy, the peculiar way in which his interests differ from those of his brothers. And his interest in castles remains with him. In 1910 he obtained his degree (1st Class Honours in Modern History) at Oxford with a thesis on "Crusader Castles." He advanced an original theory, which Aldington, of course, repudiates.

In these letters there is a great deal about bicycle journeys in France, and in these this schoolboy tends to identify a kilometre with an English mile, and claims to have ridden a greater number of miles a day than was quite likely. This adolescent boasting Aldington seizes on as evidence that later, as a soldier, he was to inflate his achievements. This seems to me absurd; for when a schoolboy, on a bicycle, has pedalled his head off all day, it is not to be taken as a proof of general unreliability if he tells his mother in a letter that he has covered a little more ground than in fact was the case. Lawrence remained a scorcher until the end of his life; in fact he killed himself attempting to get more miles out of a motor-bike than it has in it to give. This is

[2]THE HOME LETTERS OF T. E. LAWRENCE AND HIS BROTHERS. Macmillan Company. New York. 1954. $10.

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a pardonable eccentricity, and it was, of course, some deep-seated juvenility which remained in him which caused his death. The Aldington book naturally coloured all these letters for me. If I had read them quite unaware of the destiny of their author, what would my opinion have been? I should have been charmed, of course, by these schoolboy missives, without a trace of anything else in the mind of this young man than all the pleasure he got out of exhibiting himself (to his mother) very learned about old churches and castles. As he became a little older, and since he lived in so central a place as Oxford, I should be surprised not to find any signs of an interest in creative literature: for instance, in a book like the *Sons and Lovers* of D. H. Lawrence, or in any French reading, even in translation. If I had heard in a preface to this book that the author of these letters had claimed to have read half the Union library, I should have been surprised not to have found evidences of this reading in the letters. There would, in short, have been a complete absence of intellectual matter to note, rather than its presence.

These letters of one who only a few years later is going to be the famous Colonel Lawrence, are conspicuously not the letters of an "intellectual." And if one adds that Lawrence is not only to become a famous soldier, but also to have intellectual pretensions, and to write books such as *The Seven Pillars of Wisdom* and *The Mint*, it is a rather curious fact that these letters should be so devoid of intellectual content.

Another thing to remember is that there was nothing of the "late colt" about Lawrence. The centre of his life is in his early days. As the great Arabian adventurer he was surrounded by people older than himself. You have, in these letters, a record of what was probably the happiest period in his life: namely the undergraduate years spent in archaeological excavations at Carchemish on the Euphrates. He distinguished himself, was very popular, and his eventual championship of Arab Freedom began to take shape there.

Prior to that, he undertook an expedition on foot, from Beirut to Sidon and beyond. He was still collecting Crusader Castles. Pages 88 to 99 are among the most interesting in the book. You first learn exactly what the food of this country is, and then, stopping with a peasant when night arrives, you move down the coast. As to the Holy Land, "everywhere one finds remains of splendid Roman roads, and houses, and public buildings." He tells us that "the sooner the Jews farm it all the better: their colonies are bright spots in a desert." His tramp was a very interesting one, and is evidence of his youthful enterprise. He was then twenty years old.

In November 1914 he is sent from London to Cairo as an Intelligence official of some kind. His knowledge of Arabic, and acquaintance with the country south of Beirut and elsewhere, made him of use for the drawing of maps to be employed by the military. This continued for the first two years of the War. Then, in March 1916, he wrote to his family, "I am going away, for a month or six weeks, to consult with some people, and suggest certain things. Is this vague enough?"

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He was to visit the British Headquarters on the Tigris, in front of Kut. His very inconspicuous, bureaucratic life was at an end. Shortly after that began his experiences in Arabia. In his letter home he does not describe where he is going or what the nature of his task is to be, but he is constantly referring to expeditions away from Cairo, and then the nature of his activities is more defined. But he writes, "I cannot enter into details." He says of his mission: "The position I have is such a queer one—I do not suppose that any Englishman before ever had such a place. . . . I act as a sort of advisor to Sherif Feisal, and as we are on the best of terms, the job is a wide and pleasant one. I live with him, in his tent."

Lawrence is admitted by everyone to have had a considerable influence on the Arabs, Feisal being the most prominent; this is explained by Aldington by the fact of his having received from two to five hundred thousand pounds (in golden sovereigns). But in these letters home there is nothing about all that. In fact, the letters stop to all intents and purposes when the War begins. In sum, they present Lawrence as a youth and young man very fully indeed, and show how cordial his relations were with his father and mother, and how his brothers looked upon him as a superior being.

★

The dedication to *The Mint*[3] runs as follows: "To Edward Garnett. 'You dreamed I came one night with this book, crying, "Here's a masterpiece, Burn it." Well—as you please.' "

It is a little surprising that Lawrence should have referred to *The Mint* as a masterpiece. It is anything but that. But it is an extremely curious document. It scrupulously narrates the initiation of a Royal Air Force recruit. From the medical examination down to the muck-cart, we are told everything that happened to Lawrence in the course of becoming Aircraftsman Shaw. It is not really very interesting, except that it is happening to so famous a man.

But certain statements that Lawrence makes in the course of this narrative, if nothing else, enable us to unravel a mystery—the mysterious behaviour of one of World War One's most romantic leaders. For why should a man who had occupied so enviable a position have sought to enlist, the moment the war was over, under an assumed name, as a humble mechanic? There is nothing in military history quite so odd.

Aldington is at a loss to find any particular dishonourable reason for Lawrence to have enlisted in the Air Force in this way. All he can think of is this: "Such was the impasse into which he had been driven by the complicated motives of his family situation, his neurosis, and the vanity that he tried to conceal behind his masks and subtleties." In other words, what drove him into the Air Force, to work as a mechanic, was the fact that his father had been a baronet living under an assumed name, which made Lawrence very

[3]THE MINT, by *T. E. Lawrence*. Doubleday. $20.00.

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neurotic. He was weighed down with the thought that he had been born out of wedlock. The improbability of such an obsession it is hardly necessary for me to point out. At the time, what was most generally believed was that Allenby's brilliant associate was engaged in some theatrical abasement, because of the betrayal of the Arabs, as he saw it, by the British government. *The Mint* leaves one with another explanation.

In the first place *The Mint,* in its literary style, suggests a reading of James Joyce. In the unexpurgated edition what we get is a realistic narrative, without any graces or urbanities, but as accurate a transcription as possible of the tirelessly sexual obscenities of army life. As an anonymous story of a sensitive recruit, it would pass as a piece of first-hand reporting, nothing more. Any interest lies solely in the identity of the narrator. One is engaged the whole time in wondering what Lawrence's reason could be for undergoing such an ordeal.

At the time of his enlistment in the R.A.F. Lawrence was a rather undersized but tough little man, thirty-five years old. He was able to run about on fatigues, to do endless drilling, to live on Army rations, to sleep in a noisy hut, to get through all this quite creditably. But merely physically, it was a strain. Often at night, he got into his bed dead beat—or on to his "biscuits", as the sections of bed were called.

"I am dog-weary at the end of each week and begin every new week fatigued. Evening finds me tired. With the work done and fearful of the morrow" (p. 150).

The great Generals, Marshall of the R.A.F., Lord Trenchard, and the rest, who began to watch over his destiny, were responsible for his dismissal from the R.A.F. and his enlistment in the Tank Corps, and then his reenlistment in the R.A.F., which last reinstatement was engineered in the highest places—the Prime Minister, Lord Baldwin, being eventually brought into the pressuring which resulted in Lawrence finding himself once more an Aircraft mechanic.

As we go on marvelling at the endurance of this man, who had risen so high in the esteem of the world, and then had projected himself downwards to the most menial military occupations, we do, in the end, reach an understanding of what impulse it was that sustained him in this effort.

During his service in India he may have read some Indian philosophy; in any case, it is towards traditional Hindu doctrine that one's mind turns for thinking of the type in which Lawrence was indulging. He was saying farewell to ambition, in an act of social suicide: but the self-destroying teaching of the followers of Mahavira would not have influenced him. Doctrines to be found in some Buddhist monastery would be more likely to provide us with a method of thinking that would enable us to understand the kind of life adopted by this metaphysical boy-scout.

Near the end of his life the following words expressed his great despondency. "Days seem to dawn, suns to shine, evenings to follow, and then I sleep. What I have done, what I am doing, what I am going to do, puzzle me and bewilder

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me. Have you ever been a leaf and fallen from your tree in autumn and been really puzzled about it? That's the feeling."

It was partly to escape this puzzled autumn-leaf falling that he attached himself blindly and aggressively to a dynamic body like the Royal Air Force. Here are the last words of *The Mint:*

> Service life in this way teaches a man to live largely on little. We belong to a big thing, which will exist for ever and ever in unnumbered generations of standard airmen, like ourselves. Our outward sameness of dress and type remind us of that. Also our segregation and concentration. The clusters of us widen out beyond Cadet College . . . over half the world. The habit of "belonging to something or other" induces in us a sense of being one part of many things.
>
> As we gain attachment, so we strip ourselves of personality . . . Airmen have no possessions, few ties, little daily care. For me, duty now orders only the brightness of these five buttons down my front.
>
> And airmen are cared for as little as they care. . . . Everywhere a relationship: no loneliness any more.

★

For the last biographer of Lawrence, an Englishwoman living in New York, he is a hero. The book[4] is well-written, and, for those who have no taste for debunking, strongly to be recommended. The account of Lawrence's years in Syria, as a young archaeologist, is admirable. The account given of his life at Carchemish is an improvement on what has been written up to now elsewhere, and one obtains a very clear idea of the scene—from the Hittite cups, four thousand years old, out of which they drank their tea, to the great number of men, of one race and another, whom they employed. Lawrence played a considerable part in the contriving of the quarters of the archaeologists, with the Roman tessellated pavement, and the bath they secured in spite of Turkish interference.

Miss Armitage is very firm on the subject of homosexuality, and even when we reach Deraa no suspicion that Lawrence had rather a taste for sexual punishment is allowed. She accepts the theory of outraged virginity. I consider Deraa the only blemish in an otherwise sensible book.

To return to the first days in England, there is, I think, about her attitude to Lawrence's illegitimacy, an inclination on Miss Armitage's part to endorse the view attributing great importance to this in Lawrence's life. I cannot believe that suddenly to discover that one's father was a baronet in disguise would be anything but a stimulus to most young men; and let me add that the fact that one's mother was only a commoner would not obliterate the pleasing effect. The lack of marriage lines would not outweigh the stimulus to which

[4]THE DESERT AND THE STARS; a Biography of Lawrence of Arabia, by *Flora Armitage*. Holt. $4.00.

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I have referred. The American may find it more difficult to understand the niceties of this question than someone hailing from England or Ireland.

Passing over the problem resulting from this psychological error, let me hasten to say that in this book a very full account is given of Lawrence's schooling and academic associations. It has been said that if you entered the quadrangle of Jesus College, Oxford, and shouted "Jones", half the windows in the College would fly open, and the occupants would stick their heads out. Lawrence became a member of that College because he had, quite accidentally, been born in Wales. One learns, in the fullest detail, what were his academic attainments—and what they were not. I remember asking Lawrence why he did not adopt the life of a Don: to which he answered that he could not do that, he did not know Latin and Greek. I had not in those days read the various studies of Lawrence's life which I have since, and I had supposed that he left a donnish career to become a soldier. My multifarious biographical reading has thrown a new light for me upon the small figure of the Bohemian boyscout which became familiar to me in the days of his motor-cycling from camp to metropolis. I never saw him out of dusty khaki, or else uniformed in Air Force blue—the days of his Arabian grandeur left far behind. He, of course, was modesty itself, and he had no desire to be thought of as a celebrated Emperor of the Desert. What he hoped to be was a great writer, like Doughty of *Arabia Deserta;* if he could have become that, I am quite sure he would have abandoned all idea of ranking high among the military.

In looking back at this book of Miss Armitage, I principally think of it as showing splendidly how this small, untidy man came up out of the excavations at Carchemish, to become the strangely famous leader of the Arabs, from Medina, up the Jordan Valley, to Syria, which he already knew so well. The fact that he was not ever a soldier, that his position in Arabia was so ornate but equivocal, was displeasing to the British officers in Cairo and elsewhere. It is wonderful to read how he received the D.S.O., or was made a Major or a Colonel, without ever having risen through the drudgery of ordinary army life. All this is extremely well told in *The Desert and the Stars.*

What is rather unusual in this book is the way in which the notion of Lawrence's romantic obsession with Arabian Freedom is exploded. It is gratifying how thoroughly that idea is disposed of: how it is shown that he was far too intelligent ever to imagine that the war would result in the ideal emergence of a powerful and independent Arabian State. To have brought this out so clearly is very much to Miss Armitage's credit. She shows Lawrence to us, looking coldly and clearly, Irishman that he was, at his exploits.

On the whole, I would like to recommend this book to anyone who wishes to instruct himself about this dazzling figure. Lawrence was much less of a mountebank than it is very easy to represent him. Allowing for Miss Armitage's hero-worship, a reader can come very near the truth, I believe, in perusing this book intelligently.

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HUGH KENNER

Unpurged Images[1]

I

THE NINE-HUNDRED-PAGE SELECTION of Yeats' *Letters*—"those which can, in the widest sense, be considered autobiographical"—manifests all the disabilities of a compendium. It is a book to read in, not to read. Like the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, it contains a variety of matter and itself adds up to nothing new, though numerous sums can be extracted from it. It is also, through no fault of the editor's, shockingly incomplete. The letters to Ezra Pound were inaccessible in Rapallo; letters to James Joyce were entoiled in buyer's and seller's red tape; letters to George Moore were destroyed by the recipient; letters to Maude Gonne destroyed by the Irish Civil War; letters to William Sharp ("Fiona Macleod") destroyed unexamined, under instructions, by his widow's executor; letters to Bernard Shaw are concealed in a mass of documents in the hands of the Public Trustee, not yet sorted; and "some letters to Lionel Johnson were lent by Miss Johnson to a gentleman who was writing a book on that poet, and have not been heard of since."

Such perforce omissions are especially irritating, not so much because we are deprived of the kick of listening in on the intimacies of giants, as because until late in his life the interest of what Yeats is saying in a letter depends to an unexpected degree on the person to whom he is saying it. Unlike Mr. Pound, whom his published letters reveal to have functioned with the same voltage whatever ear-trumpet he was connected with, Yeats was exceedingly sensitive to the interests and receptivity of the correspondent. If in conversation, as Olivia Shakespeare is reported to have remarked, he was "conscious only of what he's saying at the moment, except *sometimes* the person he's saying it to," in letter-writing he was, until about the age of 50, all compliance. Thus on neighbouring pages we find him writing easy gossip to Katherine Tynan, deferential second thoughts to an editor:

> Thank you very much for the cheque. What you say about the style of the article is I think true. And one of the ballads is certainly morbid (the woman about whom it is, is now in the Sligo madhouse or was there some while since). However I do not think the Howth one morbid, though now in thinking it over I quite agree with you that neither are suitable for a newspaper. . . . (38)

—and heavily Briticised irony in a public complaint about misprints:

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[1]THE LETTERS OF W. B. YEATS, edited by *Allan Wade*. The Macmillan Company. $9.50. THE IDENTITY OF YEATS, by *Richard Ellmann*, Oxford University Press. $6.00. THE UNICORN: WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS' SEARCH FOR REALITY, by *Virginia Moore*. The Macmillan Company. $6.50.

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> Dear Sir, I write to correct a mistake. The curious poem in your issue of the 19th inst. was not by me, but by the compositor, who is evidently an imitator of Browning. I congratulate him on the exquisite tact with which he has caught some of the confusion of his master. I take an interest in the matter, having myself a poem of the same name as yet unpublished. Yours faithfully, W. B. Yeats. (55)

Within this early prose style, leisurely without distinction, one observes a constant shifting of center, a complaisant mutation of what seems too amorphous to be called personality, while a mind active at intervals, like a chameleon's tongue, comes at unexpected moments into view. The early letters are mostly taken up with small talk and the practical details of making a hack's living:

> I told you about the man who came and asked me to do literary notes for the *Manchester Courier*. They give me very little trouble and are fairly profitable. I got £7 for an article in *Leisure Hour* and have had two in *Scots Observer* and I sent off another. The *Scots Observer* pays well, about £1 a column. These matters have made the *Countess* [*Cathleen*] fare but badly. . . . I shall have a day at the *Countess* tomorrow. . . . (122)

He even wrote, for money, verses to illustrations supplied by the Tract Society, for publication in the *Girls' Own Paper:*

> . . . *The sunlight flickering on the pews,*
> *The sunlight in the air,*
> *The flies that dance in threes and twos,*
> *They seem to join her prayer. . . .*

This sample he sent, good-naturedly, to Miss Tynan, to show her, he explained, how orthodox he could be. "You see how proud of myself I have been for being so businesslike. I have been making amends to myself by doing little else than planting sunflowers and marigolds all afternoon." But by the end of the letter he had lost confidence in the efficacy of his genial poise; there is an anxious postscript: "Do not be disgusted at these trite verses for the Tract Society. I shall never do any more, I think." (122)

That isn't the Byzantine Yeats; but midway in the same letter we come across this classic paragraph:

> What poor delusiveness is all this "higher education of women." Men have set up a great dull mill called examinations, to destroy the imagination. Why should women go through it, circumstance does not drive *them?* They come out with no repose, no peacefulness, their minds no longer quiet gardens full of secluded paths and umbrage-circled nooks, but loud as chaffering market-places. Mrs. Todhunter is a great trouble mostly. She has been through the mill and has got the noisiest mind I know. She is always denying something. . . . (123)

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It is like crossing a sudden loop in time. Yeats might have written that at 60; he wrote it at 24. And there are many such loops. By careful selection one might compile from the first third of the book (1887-1900) all the elements of developed Yeatsism: for instance—

> Yet this I know: I am no idle poetaster. My life has been in my poems. To make them I have broken my life in a mortar. . . . I have brayed in it youth and fellowship, peace and worldly hopes. I have seen others enjoying, while I stood alone with myself—commenting, commenting, —a mere dead mirror on which things reflect themselves. I have buried my youth and raised over it a cairn—of clouds. (84)

—not from the decade of *The Tower,* not from the year of "The Wild Swans at Coole" and "Men Improve with the Years", but from the months just preceding the publication of *The Wanderings of Oisin* (aetat. 23). The matrix for his famous confrontations of impotent wisdom and uncomprehending passion is this more fundamental antithesis between those who participate and the artist whose soul reflects.

> *What portion in the world can the artist have*
> *Who has awakened from the common dream*
> *But dissipation and despair?*

—in 1915 a more trenchant expression, but not a newly discovered theme. Time, in the conventional scheme posited by Yeats criticism, has received credit for bringing him many things which were part of his initial kit.

What happened with time was not so much that the essentials were augmented, as that the inessentials were evaporated. The unpurged images of day recede. The small talk fades from the letters, or is transmuted into accomplished anecdotage; the concern for practical detail is turned away from his own affairs, away from fascination with the Robinson Crusoe mechanics of getting a writer's living, and directed outward on programs of ameliorative public action: the Irish Literary Movement, the Abbey Theatre, work to be done because it needed doing. Finally the personality attains the dimensions, and the confidence, to engulf both gossip and business. The letters of the last ten years are, unlike all the rest, continuously exciting. Nothing seems trivial, and as the time shortens the pace mounts:

> . . . One reason why these propagandists hate us is that we have ease and power. Your tum ti-ta-tum is merely the dance music of the ages. They crawl and roll and wallow. You say that we must not hate. You are right, but we may, and sometimes must, be indignant and speak it. Hate is a kind of "passive suffering," but indignation is a kind of joy. "When I am told that somebody is my brother Protestant," said Swift, "I remember that the rat is a fellow creature"; that seems to me a joyous saying. We that are joyous need not be afraid to denounce. . . . You say we must love, yes, but love is not pity. It does not desire to change its

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> object. It is a form of the eternal contemplation of what is. When I take a woman in my arms I do not want to change her. If I saw her in rags I would get her better clothes that I might resume my contemplation. But these Communists put their heads in the rags and smother. (876)

Three weeks before his death he is writing,

> I know for certain that my time will not be long. . . . I am happy, and I think full of energy, of an energy I had despaired of. It seems to me that I have found what I wanted. When I try to put all into a phrase I say, "Man can embody truth but he cannot know it." I must embody it in the completion of my life. The abstract is not life and everywhere draws out its contradictions. You can refute Hegel but not the Saint or the Song of Sixpence. . . . (922)

II

There is nothing essentially new here. The reader will already be familiar with the outlines of this development from diffident youth to outrageous passionate sage. It has been for some years the theme of the standard books about Yeats, which, bending to the temptations of the subject, have gotten themselves written out of a division of interest in which poetry—the part of himself Yeats designedly gave to the public—is treated chiefly as a body of evidence throwing light on the personal integration of an old man now many years dead. He wanted the integration so as to be more wholly a poet—"Man can embody truth but he cannot know it"—but one is led to suppose that it had some independent importance. Dr. Jeffares' book is called *W. B. Yeats, Man and Poet;* it ends, "He had made himself a great poet." Mr. Ellman's first book is called *Yeats: The Man and the Masks;* in its summary chapter we read how "with great courage and will, he tried to become the hero of whom he had dreamed. . . . His amazing achievement was to succeed partially. . . . He looked the poet, and he lived the poet." Even Miss Koch, who pretends *(W. B. Yeats: The Tragic Phase)* to guide us through the last poems by the unaided light of the poems themselves, in fact does nothing of the kind. Her initial premise is but the orthodox one inverted: "In old age, Yeats became a great poet but he was more than conscious that he had not become a great man." She dilates on the Steinach operation, fusses with interim drafts, and boxes the bibliographic compass in—of all places—her discussion of that cryptic but admirably direct poem "The Statues".

It is arguable that Yeats would be better read if less were accessible that he didn't mean the reader of his poetry to see. One advantage of having the

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Letters to plough through is that one can learn in an evening how the principle of obfuscation operates. We find him thanking Sarah Purser for her "charming embroidered book cover" (235), or anxiously writing Lady Gregory about his forgotten trouser-stretcher (543), or requesting Olivia Shakespeare to send him from a bird shop a bundle of nesting material "to help my canaries who are nest-making but with sheep's wool and green moss which they dislike" (680), and observe, in the contexts, a progressive tightening. It is an effort for him (1894) to seem at ease about the book cover, but it is part of the serene bardic role (1922) to be occupied in the Tower with his canaries. The random social gestures, we note with satisfaction, are becoming the very repertoire of the self-dramatizing style. But there are hundreds of paragraphs that won't fit into this comfortable progression, and these contain the very things that Yeats is intent on *telling* his correspondents, in a constant obsession with stating with exactness something of importance:

> It is not inspiration that exhausts one, but art. (87)
>
> The best argumentative and learned book is like a mechanical invention and when it ceases to contain the newest improvements becomes, like most things, not worth an old song. (246)
>
> I hold as Blake would have held also, that the intellect must do its utmost "before inspiration is possible." It clears the rubbish from the mouth of the sybil's cave but it is not the sybil. (262)
>
> I do not understand what you mean when you distinguish between the word that gives your idea and the more beautiful word. (343)
>
> The subjects which people think suitable for drama get fewer every day. (361)
>
> Drama for them consists in a tension of wills excited by commonplace impulses, especially by those impulses that are the driving force of rather common natures. . . . The commonplace will, that is, the will of the successful business man, the business will, is the root of the whole thing. Indeed when I see the realistic play of our time, even Ibsen and Sudermann, much more when I see the plays of their imitators, I find that blessed business will keeping the stage most of the time. What would such writers or their stage managers do with the mockery king of snow? Or with Lear upon his heath? (441)
>
> One thing I am now quite sure of is that all the finest poetry comes logically out of the fundamental action, and that the error of late

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> periods like this is to believe that some things are inherently poetical, and to try to pull them on to the scene at every moment. (460)

These are all early; the date of the latest of them is 1904. Their range and point need no comment. They exhibit none of the dreaminess we have been trained to expect from the Yeats of that period. Nor, really, does the context from which they are excerpted, much of it a tissue of shrewd manoeuvres for earning necessary money or arranging sympathetic reviews. What developed wasn't the grip of his mind, though it came to grip more and more things; what developed was the art: specifically, the art of putting things more and more arrestingly, and setting the matters that interested him in closer, more electrifying relationship with one another. This is a technical development; what makes it look like a development of personality is our proneness to forget that we are not after all in touch with a person, but with written words.

The reader of the early letters, then, confronted by so many things pointing in so many directions, soon grows inured to their penetrative force and starts listening to the Yeatsian voice, which grows, plainly, more assured. In the same way, it is natural to assume that that is the outline of Yeats's poetic development too—the personality ramifying, consolidating itself, assuming control; hence that what his published books are "about" is the effort to fabricate a durable self. This is an especially natural assumption for the reader of the *Letters* because of the color it acquires from whatever he remembers of whatever books about Yeats he may have read: Mr. Henn's, Mr. Jeffares', Mr. Ellman's. Each of these writers, one may surmise, has fallen victim to the experience of reading through a great deal of material which Yeats did not intend for the public eye; this is exactly the position of a reader of the *Letters*. His ostensible subjects, when he writes for himself alone or for friends, are so miscellaneous that one ignores them and attends to the constant element, the style; and what the developing style does—so runs the account—is to parallel, as one mushroom does another, the fostered growth of the famous personality. Q.E.D.

Hence the Yeatsian critical tradition: an industry erected on the premise that the coherence of the poetic oeuvre not only reflects supinely some coherence lying outside the volumes of poetry themselves, but cannot even be said with confidence to exist until that external center has been located, delimited, and surveyed. Even F. R. Leavis thought that the poetry was "little more than a marginal comment on the main activities of his life." Others play down the activities as too miscellaneous to keep track of, and offer, as fulcrum, *A Vision*, of which Yeats wrote in a letter of 1931,

> The young men I write for may not read my *Vision*—they may care too much for poetry—but they will be pleased that it exists. Even my simplest poems will be the better for it. . . . I have constructed a myth, but then one can believe in a myth—one only assents to philosophy. (781)

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He was sanguine if he thought that the books about him would be one day written by these young men who cared much for poetry. Instead of addressing themselves to the poems, a brief generation of critics assaulted the doors of that Gothic fortress, *A Vision,* or scrutinizing its interior by periscope reported that it was full of bats. Worse followed: an immense limbo, consisting of the poet's diaries, notebooks, drafts and unpublished mss., was opened to certified explorers after his death, and the heady possibility that the clues to what Yeats had been making lay in his lumber-room, or in the chips from his workbench, overwhelmed everyone who has so far reported. It is doubtful if what a major writer actually published has ever been so little trusted.

What you can reconstruct from such materials is the poet's biography, or one level of it; the current postulate of Yeats criticism is that the poems depend from the life, not so much the public life as the inner life, the diary-life, and are explicated one by one in the light of their author's private obsessions and self-communings:

> *Caught in that sensual music, all neglect*
> *Monuments of unaging intellect.*

One hears at great length what Yeats' notebooks contained on the subject of Byzantium ("Idea for a poem. . . .", etc.), and receives assurance, from a letter to Lady Gregory on the death of Mabel Beardsley, that Yeats didn't invent the rouged cheeks or the trousered dolls. It grows harder and harder for the tradition to preserve him as a major poet, except by an act of assertion, or by transposing to the verse the impressiveness of the persona of the last decade. Gradually, in the texture of critical emphasis, the poems whose strings lead back to some inner crisis are allowed to supplant all the rest (which, when clues turn up, get explicated as puzzles), and no poem is allowed, as Yeats intended, to explicate its neighbour in the cunningly-arranged volumes.

Dr. Virginia Moore, for instance, is hardly interested in the poetry at all, but in quest of clues to the diary-life she has ransacked unpublished writings by the trunkful: not omitting "his brown calf 1893 Order notebook bearing a rose cross on the cover and marked 'PRIVATE'." Her breathless book devotes itself to the poet's complex and evolving religious system, of which, for all the spatter of detail, it is difficult to discern much above the din of Miss Moore's rhetorical questions—some 26 on the first three pages. This subject, she occasionally reminds us, consulting the scorecard, is gone into by her a good deal more deeply than by the previous biographers—all long books about Yeats use a biographical convention and should perhaps be judged by their interest as fiction. We learn, for instance, in great detail about the Rosicrucian rituals in which Yeats took part and are given extracts from the minutes of numerous seances. Miss Moore has followed Yeats through a frightening amount of esoteric reading. Also, she is determined not to be dull (so she interrupts a quotation from "Easter 1916" to jog us awake with an ecstatic nudge: "To think that

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ordinary men from counter, desk, and 'greasy till' had achieved, all in a flash, their unselfish heroic opposites!"), and equally determined not to seem to be taken in by the Anima Mundi's exciting nonsense (so she interrupts the exposition of the lunar wheel with sundry italicized queries, and reflects that it would have been more sensible for Yeats to use the solar Zodiac instead). There is also, to relieve the scholarship, a great deal of impressionistic biography ("Meanwhile Miss Georgie Hyde-Lees—or George, as he preferred to call her—was growing wiser in the ways of music, literature, and esotericism. Twenty-three: so young and so old") which occasionally achieves a delectable bathos, *sui generis:*

> On their return in May, the Yeatses stayed first in the Pounds' flat in London, and then, again, at Oxford, where Dr. Oliver Gogarty removed the poet's tonsils. He was busy writing his *Autobiographies.* Ah, the great and little gyres! History had its own logic—who could stop it? (280)

Dr. Moore's saving merit is her meticulous documentation of virtually every statement; like an Irish castle knocked down for shipment to America, every stone of the great System and its outbuildings is numbered, and whoever can find a use for the staggering quantity of information she has heaped into piquant effects—like Bouvard and Pécuchet's landscaped Garden—will experience little difficulty in taking the pieces apart for knowing reassembly.

Mr. Ellmann is a suaver expositor. Having written one book concentrating on the famous Emerging Selfhood, in which Yeats looked rather like an unreliable old man on a mountain-top, he makes, so to speak, amends with a book concentrating on writing, in which Yeats is permitted to look rather like a contributor to the *Kenyon Review,* cautiously husbanding his themes and doing nothing in excess without a reason. In his new book Mr. Ellmann raises and thoroughly illustrates a number of the right topics, such as Yeats' writing of common English as if it were a learned language (pp. 133-145), and has some useful generalizations to offer: for instance that the early volumes were perhaps written and arranged on a conscious analogy with Morris's art of tapestry (pp. 20-24). Alas, it is borne upon one that beneath his urbanity and impeccable industriousness Mr. Ellmann's interest in poetry is rather botanical, an unfortunate temperament to bring to the work of the poet who fought the Salamis of the modern intellect. In his usage, a poem always *illustrates* something: thus the third stanza of "The Gyres" illustrates the proposition that "in the midst of matters of great moment, his attitudes are too rich to permit his earnestness to be irritating". Mr. Ellmann commits himself to a good deal more detailed exegesis than any previous commentator. He has done everything he possibly can with the poems, including the useful service of listing the dates of composition whenever discoverable, but he just can't get into them. An Appendix discusses 35 of them in systematic detail, sometimes in a knowing

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shuffle of early drafts, sometimes more directly; thus of the two "Fragments" we are told that the first presents "a mock-creation in which God's Caesarian operation is performed on Locke rather than Adam and brings forth not Eve but the spinning-jenny" (collateral citation of a prose allusion), and that the second "holds that the first was no idle fancy, but came from medium's mouth, from nothing, from the forest loam, from dark night." Yeats uses fewer words than his paraphraser without being more obscure. Mr. Ellmann is much more at home with biography, and employs the by now invariable semi-novelized biographical scaffolding ("In 1889 Yeats, then twenty-four years old, gave some fatherly advice to an aspiring poet. He wrote to her: . . ."); so what we have this time is a biography of Yeats' style, with descriptive notes and illustrations, a competent piece of book-making. In other words, we are in the presence of yet another version of the standard Yeats-book, in which an earnest young man who did not know how to do what he wished forged a self that could do anything it wished at all. The emphasis throughout is on the thriftiness of Yeats' stylistic development, its gradualness, its logic, its abandoning of nothing and transformation of everything: hence, permeating the compact expository structure, an unintentional suggestion that nothing much really happened, just the maturation of a (we concede) very great poet.

There is still room for a book on Yeats which examines what he had to say.

JOSEPH BENNETT

A Bourgeois Eros

CONFESSIONS OF FELIX KRULL, CONFIDENCE MAN, by *Thomas Mann.* Knopf. $4.50.

THE REAPPEARANCE OF Mann's *eros,* again in a juvenile form, shows a consistency of attitude which gives bulk to his life work. As a novel of high adventure, the book is fascinating; in so far as it is a collection of asides, on the usual Mann topics—natural history, the nature of love, the interchangeability of the social hierarchy, etc.—it seems run down, as if the clock were nearly stopping. For this material has all been worked over so many times before. The ponderousness with which Mann sets about to philosophize, the windiness of his disquisitions, seem more obvious in this ultimate work than in any other, and utterly irrelevant to the very serious fictional business of keeping his lively story in progress. The narrative here flourishes with unusual exuberance, and one resents any interruption.

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One returns with relief to the figure of Felix Krull—certainly one of Mann's most engaging heroes, although no intellectual content is elaborated in that individual's prodigious brain. Mann has fastened upon him a naively pompous manner of speech and rather too great a number of situational clichés. We are overly conscious that this is an essay in one of the great traditions of the European novel.

Yet the old magic is there, and Krull leaps to life, evoking the Comic Muse, with fiery overtones, again and again, such as was never done before by Mann and never will be? We are told that this was merely the first part of a longer work, the Life of the hero, but I am glad that it ends where it did and do not want to see more. There is no more interest in Krull, beyond this book, for us or for Mann, because eventually he has no intellectual interest; it is just a nimble, clever head. The ending is one of Mann's greatest technical achievements, unquestionably the greatest ending in the tradition of the picaresque novel in any language; a *dénouement* in every sense of the word.

The Comic Muse takes hold of Mann and produces some unrivalled scenes: there is the magic (in every sense of the word) in Krull's military conscription scene: high farce raised to the level of symbolic necessity, the transference of social roles as a rite, a sacred fulfillment of humanity. The complacency of the hero in his adventures, and his unrivalled pride in his loquacity, are part of his charm. Never has one of Mann's heroes been so verbal, and so shallow of brain. An obvious irony is intended. But the conscription scene before the medical board has the same hallucinatory and compulsive quality as the scene of the spirit-materialization of Joachim Ziemssen during the séance in *The Magic Mountain*. Magic once again, an old Mann preoccupation, this time a comic magic, for his subject is transference of social roles. And, by setting the time in 1895, the whole social framework has a quaint and odd delicacy, to be explored sympathetically and lovingly by the tongued flame of Mann's irony and wit.

The ornate world of the hotel, the St. James and Albany on the Rue St. Honoré, is described with the interest of a Balzac and the elegance of a Proust, the Paris of the gaslight era and opera capes enticingly rendered. The hero here, drawn from the model of Eugène de Rastignac, and the encyclopedic descriptions, remind us that this, like the novels of Balzac, is a bourgeois novel since the bourgeois, "of good family, but not of family", carries in his person the mystery of the flexibility of social status. To a certain extent the combination of the bourgeois novel with the picaresque accounts for the ennui in Mann's philosophical asides—the sharks and whales and Neanderthals, etc. They really do not belong here—they belonged in *The Magic Mountain* and *Joseph* and *Dr. Faustus*—it is too late for them, we have got beyond that. The rendering of the bourgeois world of Krull's childhood, the preoccupation with forms, surfaces—clothes and the cut of them, jewels, upholstery, luggage, railway carriages, all described with the delicious interest that Balzac would have given

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them—the continual juxtaposition of the life of the poor and the rich—proclaim this a bourgeois novel *par excellence,* and the joy that Mann feels in lingering over all these details and textures is at once communicated to the reader.

Krull is his first and last human hero—never adolescent as in *Buddenbrooks,* nor a listening post as in *The Magic Mountain,* nor semi-divine as in *Joseph* and *Dr. Faustus*—in spite of all the verbiage which is made to come out of his mouth. Beautiful, as is the *eros* throughout, but of limited intelligence, all-desired, and by both sexes, he of necessity seeks out older women. Adventures with a housemaid, and with the unreal dream-lover Rozsa, are merely preludes for the great scene of the seduction of Krull—as *eros* and Hermes, god of thieves—by the middle-aged and plump-desirable Diane Philibert, surely the visible manifestation, in her person, of the higher stages of hotel society—that is, a society in which rank is assigned according to the expense of the rooms. This magnificent scene is in the greatest European comic tradition—double deception and double roles, youth and age, virginity and insatiety, wealth and poverty—so that what is purely a sexual exercise becomes a method of concentrating the full range of comic means, comic transference, double identities, on one pair of bodies in a hotel room. Grand, *comique,* satisfying—it is as if you took all the situations of Molière and focussed them on one act. And once again Mann shows his ability to work within the subtlest and most diverse of European literary traditions.

What is one to say of the Portuguese chapters? Extraordinary locale, one far enough removed from the *grand monde* to allow a frivolous deception on the highest level—the King himself is interviewed—yet, for all its provinciality, an unquestionable capital, with an unquestioned court, diplomatic representatives, and protocol. Krull's stuffiness seems a bit tedious in Lisbon; the long *racontage* sequence about Fripon, Minime and Radicule over-labored, so that here, at least, Mann sinks to the obvious, and misses the comic, the result being that we have something not particularly funny which the author thinks is very funny—pets and servants in the parental castle, parents who are not Krull's parents, but whose foibles he exploits to amuse royalty. Here the hand of the master slips. But the letter in which they appear seems well enough contrived to show the poverty of Krull's mind and his overt cleverness.

Once we have done away with the Lisbon savant and all the musty facts and fancies that Mann the scientist, the all-knower, hangs upon his unreal form, we can concentrate on the really delightful *dénouement:* Krull's relations with the savant's wife and daughter. Here again the young woman is merely a mocking voice, a mirror of Krull's beauty and self-arrogance, while the mature woman arouses his confidence and takes on a gratifying reality. Again the equivalent of Diane Philibert, the robust matron brings the matter to a conclusion which has no rival for suspense and surprise in the world of comic fiction—it is simply superb, inspired writing, and any attempt to con-

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tinue the novel beyond this point would be absurd, would ruin the edge of a very fine steel knife blade. Which is why Mann closed the book and did not go beyond, except to state on the frontleaf that these are "the early years". For I think that he was surprised as any of us at the ending, and being vouchsafed this miraculous touch of genius, closed the book, grateful that his work should end with such surprising, immediate and supernatural efficacy.

If Diane Philibert, the descendant of Molière's Précieuses Ridicules, as the wife of a manufacturer of toilet seats, has an indeterminate social status, no less does the superb Maria, born da Cruz of an ancient but not noble Portuguese family, and married to a mere German savant, Professor Kuckuck. She will cuckold her husband and marry her daughter to his taxidermist assistant; and Krull the changeling moves through this maze of changing social determinations with all the skill and assurance of a tranced dancer. We do not want to see him again when the book is through; he has pushed his needle through the point and that point is the period at the end of the book; a neat stitch.

STANLEY EDGAR HYMAN

Identities of Isaac Babel

THE COLLECTED STORIES OF ISAAC BABEL. Criterion Books. $5.00.

Now that Frank O'Connor has been awarded "some claim to greatness" by Arthur Mizener, and Wyndham Lewis is celebrated as "the greatest prose master of style of my generation" by T. S. Eliot, perhaps it is time we heard more of Isaac Babel. In his lifetime this Soviet Jewish writer published three books of short stories: *Red Cavalry,* based on his experiences fighting in Poland in 1920, with Budenny's First Cavalry Army, in 1923; *Odessa Tales,* based on his boyhood, in 1924; and a collected volume with additional stories in 1932. Since 1938, when he published some reminiscences of Gorky, his name is said not to have appeared in a Soviet publication, and he is believed to have died in a penal camp in 1939 or 1940, with several conflicting accounts of his arrest and death available. *Red Cavalry* was brought out here by Knopf in 1929, in a graceless translation by Nadia Helstein, woefully bowdlerized and cut; and a small group of Babel's Jewish stories from all three books was published as *Benya Krik, the Gangster and Other Stories* by Schocken Books in 1948, beautifully translated by Avrahm Yarmolinsky; but out of their context in *Red Cavalry* and with their chronology reversed, the Jewish stories gave a distorted impression of Babel's work.

With the publication for the first time in any language of all of Babel's short stories, ably edited and translated by Walter Morison, with an introduc-

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tion by Lionel Trilling, we finally have an adequate English text, and Criterion Books deserves fairly handsome congratulations. If Trilling's intelligent and sensitive introduction is not the last word, it is at least a good word, and his currently fashionable voice may succeed in introducing Babel to the thousands of readers the book deserves instead of the hundreds it might otherwise get. Morison's translation may be, for all I know, more faithful to the Russian than Yarmolinsky's, but it seems to me to weaken some of the comic effect and to be less eloquent at key rhetorical points. In Morison's version, a rich Odessa merchant is called "Jew-and-a-Half" because "no single Jew could have had so much dash and so much cash"; in Yarmolinsky's translation, he is "Yid-and-a-Half" because "no one Jew could contain so much insolence and so much money." In the story "The Rabbi's Son" in *Red Cavalry,* the dying body of Elijah, the Communist son of Rabbi Motale Bratslavsky, the last of the Chernobyl dynasty, is carried into Babel's railroad car by two sturdy female typists. As Morison has it, the girls "stared dully at his sexual organs, the stunted, curly-covered virility of a wasted Semite". In Yarmolinsky, the girls "stared drily at his private parts, the tender curly maleness of a spent Semite". (The Helstein text simply has "and stared at him". In addition, by ending the book on this penultimate story, with its noble climax of Jewish and Communist idealism, and chopping off the last story, in which the narrator achieves his "dream" of riding a horse like a Cossack and being accepted, she does Babel a substantial injustice.)

Reading the collected stories, one's first impression is apt to be that whereas any given story seems clear and sharp, as a group they become much more ambiguous and evasive. We are forced to come to terms very quickly with Babel's antinomies: he is a Soviet writer for whom the welcomed Revolution is mostly an image of the mindless animal brutality of Cossacks, a Jewish writer whose essence of Jewish life is "a violent smell of rotten herrings", a traditional Russian writer who identified so strongly with Maupassant (not with "the lion in the path", characteristically, but with the insane dying Maupassant regressively crawling on all fours and eating his own excrement) that for a while he tried to write in French.

Trilling describes one of Babel's major themes as "the test and the initiation", but I would prefer to characterize it more generally as changes of identity through rituals of rebirth. To my reading, there are not one but two narrators in *Red Cavalry* (besides the illiterate Cossacks who tell their stories in the first person), one a gentile intellectual addressed as "Lyutov", who refers to "the occult crockery the Jews use only once a year, at Eastertime", and sees the Polish Jews as living in filth and meaningless suffering, like animals; the other a Jewish intellectual, Babel himself, who gets away from the Red Army in Zhitomir on the eve of the Sabbath, "oppressed by the dense melancholy of memories", to search for "a Jewish glass of tea, and a little of that pensioned-off God in a glass of tea". One of the Odessa stories of Benya Krik, the Jewish

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gangster who "can spend the night with a Russian woman and satisfy her", is told, not by Babel, but *to* Babel by Reb Arye-Leib, an old man from the poorhouse, so that he can reproach Babel with being everything Benya is not, a coward "with spectacles on your nose and autumn in your heart". Arye-Leib says:

> What would you have done in Benya Krik's place? You would have done nothing. But *he* did something. That's why he's the King, while you thumb your nose in the privy.

Thus in *Red Cavalry* Babel is reborn as "Lyutov", without his Jewishness; still scorned as "you guys in specs" and "four-eyes", he is reborn again without his crippling intellectualism in the last story and accepted on terms of something like equality; that this *ersatz* Cossack is in turn an inadequate *persona* only comes clear in the stories after *Red Cavalry*, where it is succeeded by even more ambiguous personalities and culminates in the image of the little child Karl-Yankel, who is to receive the Soviet Kingdom. The physical horrors of *Red Cavalry* are a catharsis by violence, the agency of these rebirths. The narrators are never participants in the violence: "Lyutov" goes into action with no cartridges in his revolver, cannot bring himself to shoot a dying friend to keep him from Polish torture, and ironically implores fate "to grant me the simplest of proficiencies—the ability to kill my fellow-men". Out of the bloodshed and fury, as Babel saw it, would come the Revolutionary redemption he hoped for, but when Gedali, the Jewish proprietor of a junkshop in Zhitomir, tells him his dream of a Revolution of joy, an International of good people, Babel answers harshly that Gedali's impossible International "is eaten with gunpowder and spiced with best-quality blood".

The book's dichotomy is not simply between "the way of violence and the way of peace", as Trilling says, or between "the Cossack ethos" and "the Jewish ethos", as Raymond Rosenthal suggested in his seminal article, "The Fate of Isaak Babel", in *Commentary*, February 1947. "Violence" and "peace" are both ambivalent terms: going into action with an unloaded gun is neither, surely, but a kind of pacific violence; the narrator's refusal to shoot his friend Dolgushov, thus letting him die slowly, "entrails hung over his knees", or suffer torture by the Poles, seems a very violent peacefulness indeed. Within the image of the Cossack there is a similar duality: the aloof Cossack officer riding through Babel's childhood Odessa "as though through a mountain pass", his hands in lemon-colored chamois gloves, is not the subhuman Cossack trooper Babel knew in Poland, wearing bast shoes and a derby. The category "Jew" similarly includes the narrow-chested Polish Jews, "these long bony backs, these tragic yellow beards", as well as "the stout and jovial Jews of the south, bubbling like cheap wine". Babel writes in one of his autobiographical stories, "Like all Jews I was short, weakly, and had headaches from studying". However, he simultaneously knows of "that unexpected breed of Jews, the tough

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fighting men, raiders, and partisans", and in his own family there is Uncle Leo who died in a brothel in Los Angeles, his grandfather who lost his pulpit for blasphemy and forgery, and a considerable number of drunkards and seducers neither short, weakly, nor studious. If Elijah Bratslavsky's virility is wasted or spent, Benya Krik's is not, and even that least likely erotic image, Benya's sister Deborah, a forty-year-old goitrous virgin, concludes her wedding festivities

> urging her fainthearted husband toward the door of their nuptial chamber, glaring at him carnivorously. Like a cat she was, that holding a mouse in her jaws tests it gently with her teeth.

The true dichotomy in Babel's writing is between culture and nature, or art and the life of action, or freedom and necessity, or any philosophic phrasing of the Darwinian conflict between life in a moral order alienated from nature and natural law, and life in a natural order antecedent to morality. Babel's true quest is not to *be* a Cossack, but to form an organic unit, a horse-man, on a horse *like* a Cossack, instead of covering the horse's back with festering sores. In the stories of Babel's boyhood this ambition was preceded by earlier passions for keeping pigeons and learning to swim, and here the Jewish tradition of a life outside nature is the enemy. "The hydrophobia of my ancestors—Spanish rabbis and Frankfurt money-changers—dragged me to the bottom," Babel writes, and the conflict of "rabbis versus Neptune" is only resolved when "the local water god", a gentile athlete, teaches him to swim and earns his love, "the love that only a lad suffering from hysteria and headaches can feel for a real man". This is a neat enough Christian baptism, but the story ends with the boy studying nature and the names of trees and birds with the same desperate monomania (culturally inherited from Spanish rabbis and Frankfurt money-changers) with which he had previously studied Talmud and Gemara.

In one of the finest comic stories in the book, "In the Basement", the young Babel tries to drown out the sound of his eccentric relatives disgracing him before a respectable school friend by reciting Antony's speech over Caesar's corpse, louder and louder. This effort to use art to deny life is inevitably doomed when the art, as the rhetoric of filial loyalty and disloyalty, only brings him closer to his problem. At the end of the story, when the boy determines to end his ruined career by drowning himself in the household water barrel, his crazy grandfather (the defrocked rabbi, the blasphemer, the forger) pulls him out and has the last word on behalf of life. "Grandson," he says, "I am going to take a dose of castor oil, so as to have something to lay on your grave."

In this complicated conflict of nature and culture, the Jews represent the heirs of all the world's culture. Babel characteristically never puts this in terms of large statements about the Judaeo-Christian tradition or the inheritance of Western humanism. Instead, Gedali's junkshop contains "gilt slippers, ship's

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cables, an ancient compass, a stuffed eagle, a Winchester with the date 1810 engraved upon it, a broken saucepan". To the beggars of Odessa at Jewish weddings come "fat-bellied jars of Jamaica rum, oily Madeira, cigars from the plantations of Pierpont Morgan, and oranges from the environs of Jerusalem". In a Jewish shop in Odessa are "olives that had come from Greece, olive oil from Marseille, coffee in beans, Malaga from Lisbon, 'Philippe and Canot' brand sardines, and Cayenne pepper". To the inn of Lyubka "the Cossack", a Jewish procuress and smuggler, come "cigars and fine silks, cocaine and files, unbonded tobacco from the state of Virginia, and dark wine from the Island of Chios". If the world's goods also include the sacred books of "that pensioned-off God" and Guy de Maupassant, the consequent disabilities start with the inability to swim or ride, and end with what the young Babel foresees in Maupassant's tragic end: "My heart contracted as the foreboding of some essential truth touched me with light fingers".

Much of Babel's imagery aims at the deliberate shock effect of surrealism: Christ's wounds are "oozing seed, a fragrant poison to intoxicate virgins"; in the Heavenly wings there is a "dismal electrician" with a "moon-extinguisher"; the great Rabbi Motale Bratslavsky greets the narrator piously, "surrounded by the liars and possessed" (here again I prefer Yarmolinsky's "surrounded by liars and madmen"); fawning officers "fished for roast chicken in the Army Commander's smiles"; the Babel house is "impregnated with the smell of leeks and Jewish destiny". Very little of the terrestrial imagery is pictorial, with the consistent exception of the Moldavanka gangsters, who look as though they were in a child's painting: they wear raspberry waistcoats, russet jackets, and azure shoes; Benya himself wears a chocolate jacket, cream pants, and raspberry boots; they all dress like "birds of paradise" and drive "lacquered carriages".

If the touch occasionally falters, and the imagery turns cute ("An orange star which had slid to the very brim of the horizon gazed wide-eyed at them"), for the most part Babel's effects are meticulously successful. Presumably the narrator of "Guy de Maupassant" reflects the author's concept of craft when he writes: "A phrase is born into the world both good and bad at the same time. The secret lies in a slight, an almost invisible twist. The lever should rest in your hand, getting warm, and you can only turn it once, not twice. . . . No iron can stab the heart with such force as a period put just at the right place". The story that to my taste is Babel's finest, "The Story of My Dovecot", is a triumph of delicate indirection and craft. It tells the narrator's experience during the 1905 pogroms without ever using the word "pogrom" until the very last sentence, summoning up all the violence and horror of the events with two "objective correlative" images: the boy's beloved pigeon crushed against his head, so that the warm guts trickle down his face, and his granduncle Shoyl, a fish peddler, lying murdered with a live pike perch still flapping in a rip in his trousers.

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The progress of the stories is the traditional tragic or ritual one from Purpose through Passion to Perception. If the boy aspired to vengeance on Shoyl's murderers and eventual despoiling of the despoilers who looted his father's store during the pogrom, *Red Cavalry* is the purgation of those purposes. Both are "Cossack" ideals eloquently achieved in the book. Matthew Pavlichenko, slapped and insulted by his master, comes back with the Red Army and stamps the *barin* to death, "trampled on him for an hour or maybe more. And in that time I got to know life through and through." Prishchepa, whose parents have been killed by the Whites and their property seized by the neighbors, comes back when the Whites have been driven out and goes around the village collecting the family belongings: "In the huts where he found gear that had belonged to his mother, a pipe that had been his father's, he left old women stabbed through and through, dogs hung above the wells, icons defiled with excrement". But Pavlichenko has in reality got to know life no better, and Prishchepa has not really restored his despoiled home but only ravaged others, and now has nothing to do but put the furniture back in the empty house, set fire to it, kill all the farm animals, and ride wildly off.

When Babel returns to Odessa after the Revolution all impulse for revenge and recovery has been burned out of him, and he aspires only to recreate the image of the events in art, to win through to perception, and, "remembering those sorrowful years, I find in them the beginning of the ills that torment me, the cause of my early fading". The narrator of the story "The Kiss", quartered in the home of a Polish schoolmaster during the fighting, and recognizing by the barricaded door and the trembling of his hosts that *he* has become the image of the persecutor, spends the night sleepless, "tormented and muddled". The next morning he says to the daughter of the family, "You must know that I have a law degree, and am reckoned a highbrow", desperately flaunting the personality he has been at such pains to suppress.

If the synthesis of Jew and Cossack (as Rosenthal first pointed out) is Benya Krik the Jewish "Cossack", his ultimate failure is that his fine comic play-acting, his masterful extortion-letters, have real consequences in the murder of an innocent Jew by one of his drunken gangsters; and Babel is with the victim's employer, shouting at Benya in fury, "A fine trick you've thought up, killing live people". Lyubka Shneiveis, "the Cossack", a maternal ogress who beats up peasants with her fists, fails as a synthesis similarly (as her mother's milk fails), and the old Turk lying in her courtyard on the way back from Mecca, refusing a doctor to die in sanctity, turns out in the story to be stronger in the integrity of his principles than she is in hers. If the boy's ambition was to be like Benya and have a "Cossack" father like Benya's father Mendel, the drunken and violent drayman, and a "Cossack" mother like Lyubka, the symbolic parents he finally achieves in "Di Grasso", the last story in the book, are Jews as absurd, ineffectual, and ironically "good" as his own parents. They are the impresario Nick Schwarz, with whom Babel has pawned

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his father's gold watch, and his wife Madam Schwarz, who is so moved by the acting of an Italian company that she makes Nick give the watch back to the boy (accompanied by "a vicious pinch"), leaving young Babel suddenly able to see the living realities of Odessa around him "as they really were: frozen in silence and ineffably beautiful".

The last sentences of Babel's stories tend to carry a great amount of weight, as though eloquence could only burst through the taut style at the very last moment. Thus "My First Goose", which recounts the narrator's only personal act of violence in *Red Cavalry*, his brutal killing of the landlady's goose to ingratiate himself with his fellow soldiers, ends: "But my heart, stained with bloodshed, grated and brimmed over". In "The Rabbi's Son", the dead Elijah Bratslavsky is revealed to have been an ambiguous blending of Jew and Communist, and his spilled pack reveals

> mandates of the propagandist and notebooks of the Jewish poet, the portraits of Lenin and Maimonides lay side by side, the knotted iron of Lenin's skull beside the dull silk of the portraits of Maimonides. A lock of woman's hair lay in a book, the Resolutions of the Party's Sixth Congress, and the margins of Communist leaflets were crowded with crooked lines of ancient Hebrew verse.

The story concludes: "And I, who can scarce contain the tempests of my imagination within this age-old body of mine, I was there beside my brother when he breathed his last." "Karl-Yankel", the comic story of an Odessa baby after the Revolution who is hotly contested by orthodox Jewry and Communist atheism (his grandmother is on trial for having him secretly circumcised in contempt of the Revolution) concludes:

> I had grown up on these streets, and now it was Karl-Yankel's turn. But they hadn't fought for me as now they were fighting for him: few were those to whom I had been of any concern.
>
> "It's not possible," I whispered to myself, "it's not possible that you won't be happy, Karl-Yankel. It's not possible that you won't be happier than I."

Ultimately, Babel's irony overwhelms everything, and Karl-Yankel is no more satisfactory a synthesis of warring opposites than Elijah the Rabbi's son, Benya and Lyubka the Jewish Cossacks no more adequate than Jew or Cossack alone. When old Rabbi Motale had asked the narrator "What is the Jew's occupation?" the answer was "I am putting into verse the adventures of Hersch of Ostropol", when his actual occupation at the moment was writing propaganda articles for *Red Trooper*. This identification with the Jewish folk hero Herschel Ostropolier, a trickster and jester who is never what he seems to be, manages to undercut both the Rabbi's values and *Red Trooper's*. The sleepy old defense lawyer in "Karl-Yankel", covered with tobacco ash, would be, we are assured,

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the head of the Sanhedrin, the Jewish high council, "if the Sanhedrin existed in our days". Is this a joke at Jewish tradition, Soviet jurisprudence, the modern world, or no joke at all?

In the last analysis, Babel evades all his categories, and our own. As Trilling writes, Babel's ambiguous art "was not a dialectic that his Russia could permit", and it seems clear that by the thirties Babel's fiction was unpublishable in the Soviet Union. Yet the signs of inner collapse and regression, the failure of any synthesis or resolution to sustain his vision, are so substantial that we need not look to external censorship to explain his silence. Ultimately Babel was neither so tough as Maupassant nor so shifty as Herschel Ostropolier. Not even his age-old body could contain the tempests of his imagination, let alone any combination of nature and culture, the Jewish community or the Soviet state. In the dozen first-rate stories he left us we have short fictions to rank with any in our time, and in his brief life and work we have perhaps the cautionary tale he saw in Maupassant's, the foreboding of some essential truth.

ROBERT MARTIN ADAMS

Fiction Chronicle[1]

HENRIK IBSEN ONCE DISTINGUISHED *Brand*, written in Italy and hence the product of wine and *pasta*, from *The League of Youth*, written in Dresden and thus the product of beer, wurst, and potato-salad. On something like this basis the novels of the quarter may be divided—even though a distressing number clearly derive from a mixture of milk of magnesia and groats.

Champagne must be Mr. Nigel Dennis's drink. *Cards of Identity* is a crazy little farce-fantasy on the theme of the disintegrated personality. Somewhere in the back of this man's mind—but it is not really the *back* of his mind, which clearly has neither front nor back, merely different exposures—somewhere in his perception, the social comedy of Miss Ivy Compton-Burnett has become fused with a nightmare of Wyndham Lewis's postwar London and the

[1]CARDS OF IDENTITY, by *Nigel Dennis*. Vanguard. $3.75. THE PICNIC AT SAKKARA, by *P. H. Newby*. Knopf. $1.25. A SHOW OF FORCE, by *Stewart Thomson*. Harpers. $3.50. THE TREE OF MAN, by *Patrick White*. Viking. $4.50. ANDERSONVILLE, by *McKinlay Kantor*. World. $5.00. A GOOD MAN IS HARD TO FIND, by *Flannery O'Connor*. Harcourt, Brace. $3.50. A CHARMED LIFE, by *Mary McCarthy*. Harcourt, Brace. $3.50. PARTISANS, by *Peter Matthiessen*. Viking. $3.00. MONEY MONEY MONEY, by *David Wagoner*. Harcourt, Brace. $3.50. THE THAW, by *Ilya Ehrenbourg*. Henry Regnery. $3.50.

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notion of Mr. Stephen Potter's Lifemanship Institute gone predatory. The result is a kind of comedy which would appall by its cruelty if it did not move one to something like hysterics by its keen edge, helterskelter pace, and shattering brilliance. At his best Mr. Dennis writes like a man throwing handfuls of broken glass in the air. The level of his best may be estimated from the first 140 pages of this book. It is a sustained, virtuoso fantasy, rich, brilliant, and inventive. There are fine pages in the latter part of the book, too, though the pace undeniably slackens when the members of the Identity Club start to present their papers. Was it not ever thus? Impressive as Thinkers are in a body, the essence of their exercise may be described as a slow, crushing strength, rather like that of the boa constrictor. Father Orfe's paper has a lambent brilliance which rather redeems the others, however, and the whole meeting is capped by a five-act drama in the most elegant pseudo-Shakespearian blank verse since *The Admirable Bashville*. Altogether, it is quite a performance, quite a performance.

Throughout, Mr. Dennis's novel rips and tears at the sacredness of the human personality and all the other greasy, liberal commonplaces of flesh and blood. When he is finished, I do not know how much is left; perhaps it is true that a puff of fresh air would scatter his Identity Club like a house of cards, even better than a policeman. In any case, the harried reviewer cannot help feeling immensely grateful for the civilized and astringent wit of this novel. Nothing funnier than the captain's capture of Dr. Towzer and Miss Tray has been written since Evelyn Waugh described a cross-country race in *Decline and Fall*. I suppose the thing that makes one happiest about the novel is its sense of high spirits, its total lack of sin, melancholy, or self-importance. And yet, in the end, it's a very modern fiction, with something rather terrifying to say about the fragile web of personality, the insubstantial threads which bind us to the sense-continuum, and (sometimes) make us one of all.

Mr. P. H. Newby's *The Picnic at Sakkara* is also comic, also skilful; but it runs to more familiar patterns. It bears a bright and glistening surface to the wars, and concerns itself with the victim rather than the perpetrators of outrageous pranks. There are large elements of E. M. Forster in it; there is a touch of the early Evelyn Waugh, perhaps one of Kafka. Of Mr. P. H. Newby there is no very distinct trace, unless in the dexterity of the dialogue, the bright ellipses and parabolas of a thoroughly controlled prose. In both the customary senses, it's a very funny book. Our hero, a teacher of English exquisite in his futility and general good will, lectures some Egyptians on the novels of George Eliot. Their response to his cultural endeavors is complicated, charming, devastatingly effective; in various ways, mostly impractical, and with a truly elegant awareness of the jargon usual on such occasions, they try to Do Him In. At one point he is reduced to bearing witness (false witness) that his own assassin is indeed a good and sincere assassin, worthy of all pro-

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fessional confidence. Reversals of this sort are hectic and many; the colloquies of Mary and the Pasha's wife are little gems of concentrated misunderstanding, and the reader's best footwork is sometimes invoked to keep his balance. In the end, it's not much more than a joke; but a bold, gay joke, which Mr. Newby recounts with so much cool, poker-faced economy that it seems like something more than it is. One could appreciate it, somehow, much better, if the hero didn't seem so definitely tailored for the dramatic talents of Danny Kaye. . . .

Has *A Passage to India* really monopolized completely the novelist's approach to colonial peoples? While Newby works the comic vein in Forster's celebrated novel, Mr. Stewart Thomson follows out the latent vein of melodrama. In *A Show of Force*, Mr. Thomson brings to his theme a certain blurred focus, for which his robust sense of theater imperfectly atones. His scene, an Arabian oil town, is well visualized. The difficulty is, that among the English transients at Maneppo there isn't really much to choose. Evans is an efficient bounder, Stratton a brute, and Quilliam all too clearly a well-meaning fool. Thus, when Benton's wife commits the usual folly, plenty of heat ensues but not very much light. There is no lack of "drama", framed for the most part in the well-worn diction of the flicks, with an occasional fresh, surprised observation out of Forster. But the core of the novel is melodrama; we pass no judgment on a human soul, or the lack of one, but merely wonder how things will come out in the end.

Patrick White's *Tree of Man* succeeds so perfectly in what it undertakes that one can't easily assess its real significance. The novel recounts from beginning to end the existence of a pair of inarticulate Diggers named Stan and Amy Parker. They have some nameless and wordless animals, in the form of dogs, ponies, and cows; they have some children, who don't blossom into speech much oftener than the equivalent number of dingo dogs; Amy has a travelling salesman named Leo who sometimes talks a bit. The whole story is told without manners, without episodes, without morals, without conflicts, and for the most part without characters. Its prose is ungainly, naive, occasionally poetic, but mostly devoted with unfaltering persistence to the simple declarative sentence. Sometimes this simple declarative sentence is broken down for extra emphasis into the simple subordinate clause. Into the simple subordinate clause. And so it goes. The remarkable thing is that, with all these limitations, the novel does succeed in building up, almost hydraulically, a kind of hypnotic pressure. The theme couldn't well take any form other than the one it has taken; the remorseless, meaningless cycles of growth and decay are here, and one senses them in all their bigness and hardness and impersonality. But then? Mr. Patrick White has very properly ignored this question, and how large it will bulk in the reader's mind depends on a very fine discrimination of reactions as between awe and monotony.

On a level not far removed from that of corn are a couple of fictions out

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of and about the South. Mr. McKinlay Kantor has written a long novel, longer than anyone would have thought possible, about the Confederate prison-camp at Andersonville, South Carolina. The title is *Andersonville.* The story is a gruesome one, told in the broad, emotional style, but honorably told, without flash tricks or really gross appeals to sentiment; and it is a major job of historical reconstruction. Indeed, it suffers from an overplus of conviction, for both the author and the reader are haunted by a sense of the material's authenticity, and the fact damps one's open sense of possibility. Still, it is a fine, broad novel in the honest, indignant, social tradition.

Miss Flannery O'Connor works in a mode almost as familiar as Mr. Kantor's, but rather more sharply angled; her tradition is Southern Gothic. She has the fresh, hard, compressed style which goes with grotesque practitioners of this art. *Grand Guignol* with hominy grits—it is a bizarre and effective combination, till one learns the range of its possibilities. Then it becomes rather predictable. Ten short stories are collected in the present volume, under the title *A Good Man is Hard to Find;* they must have had considerably more impact when encountered separately than they do when packaged as a unit. A neglected little boy, a hogpen, a dunking preacher in the middle of a river—surely if the child is not eaten by the hogs, he will be drowned in the river. Many years ago Miss Dorothy Canfield Fisher published some Made-to-Order Stories; the title applies here. One must shuffle the properties to produce the most disastrous combination possible; that is the story. Miss O'Connor's gifts are great, but it is painful to see her trapped in the machinery of a ready-made manner.

And then, of course, there is Miss Mary McCarthy. She has achieved, in contemporary letters, the enviable position of the girl nice children don't play with; but the larger question remains, What can she do about it? *A Charmed Life* will confirm those who feel that unusual talents are being cramped here by an inflexible point of view, a failure of control. The two protagonists in the story are, essentially, knaves sojourning in a summer-colony of fools. Miles and Martha are ideally suited to one another, being equally pretentious, dishonest, and clever; and nothing in the novel surpasses the entry into their low, vulgar little souls. Martha is exposed in a beautiful series of evasive crescendos; somehow or other, the reason why she is innocent of one scandalous charge is always that she is guilty of another, slightly more scandalous. And Miles is brought before us, taking refuge from his own errors in a discussion of Nietzsche by saying that all the translations are inadequate. Well, these are fine beginnings; the patients are ripped open with contemptuous ease, but who is to perform the diagnosis, let alone the crucial operation? Here Miss McCarthy starts to fumble. Perhaps certain non-literary considerations prevent her from seeing all the way through her repugnant protagonists, or from allowing anyone in the novel to do so. At all events, there is a definite failure

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of vision. She has dull characters, witless characters, empty characters aplenty; but they will not serve. She has a drunken vicomte with a Catholic background, who, at first glance, seems promising. But he is not manipulated with any intelligence, is not made to serve any purpose at all. He becomes a property, when he could have been a catalyst; the only character who ever had such a potential. And when he is allowed to dwindle away, the novel as a whole turns into a mere romp among the properties, an exercise in Pollyanna turned upside down. Pollyanna was always a dull little girl, even with her legs waving in the air.

Partisans by Peter Matthiessen deals with the important theme of the humanitarian Bolshevik, and does not shirk the fine, generous indignation of Zola's rhetoric and Zola's realism, with which this theme must be presented. The melodrama is sometimes stagy, but no more so than the theme itself; what really weakens the novel is a set of built-in flashbacks which choke the reader's progress and provoke his incredulity. It is a good, brave book for Mr. Matthiessen to have undertaken; but the textbookishness of his characters' ideas has not been strictly enough confined, and one is always rather painfully aware of a disparity. Physical scenes are sparely and incisively realized; ideas are cast in a florid and sweeping form which sometimes reverberates with all the glorious solemnity of John Foster Dulles. And the total absence of wit! Surely it's important for a young man to Find His Soul, but not at the expense of losing his sense of humor. Mr. Matthiessen is going to write a fine novel one of these days, but this isn't it.

David Wagoner, in the provocatively titled *Money Money Money*, takes Augie March's Chicago for his theatre, and a large, feeble-minded fellow for his hero. One of the tacit conventions of pitting an absolute innocent against desperate odds is that one shouldn't let him get hurt too badly. Mr. Wagoner, who seems to have the essentially evil imagination of a prize-fight manager, overmatches his Willy so terribly that one feels like yelling, "Stop the fight!" as early as page fifty. Still, it's a powerful novel. Mr. Wagoner has a way of creating the warmth and inward simplicity of an utter innocent beset by a very bad city; and certain scenes, like that where Willy and his money are squabbled over in a cheap bar, have the true intensity of nightmare.

Aldous Huxley's latest fragment belongs to a very odd genre of fiction, part-lecture, part-novel, part-free-association. *The Genius and the Goddess* has to do with the interesting concept that even the wives of eminent physicists have sex-lives. The narrator, a Charlie McCarthy by the name of Rivers, is supposed to have a mind like a steel trap, but on the main points at issue it clunks like an old-fashioned Figure-4. You see, the genius-physicist was sick, and his goddess-wife was supposed somehow to give him vitality, which she couldn't do till she'd been unfaithful with the bewildered Rivers. Man and boy, Rivers has been thinking about this whole matter for nigh onto forty

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years, but his steel trap still hasn't come up with anything much more impressive than *Gosh, life certainly is peculiar.*

Henry Regnery, an enterprising little house in the Windy City, has set a charming new precedent by publishing Ilya Ehrenbourg's *The Thaw* with a "special supplement" by Russell Kirk, which tells the reader just how bad a novel he has bought. Fortunately, this unnatural critical honesty turns out to be merely a usual form of political badger-baiting. Malenkov, or somebody, is to be held responsible for Ehrenbourg's deficiencies as a novelist; the novel is merely bait for Mr. Kirk's lecture. Truly, though, Mr. Kirk need not have worried; nobody has suspected either him, or Henry Regnery, of harboring ideas subversive of the 'murrican way. They are impervious, quite impervious. Having observed the team in action against Ehrenbourg, one wouldn't shrink from matching them against Sholokhov, Pasternak, or the sneaking Tolstoy himself!

In reading new novels, under the kaleidoscope of colors, themes, and settings, one is impressed more with structural uniformity than with variety. The majority of these fictions are built on patterns which would not have shocked John Galsworthy; and those few which set themselves the task of structural innovation seem in many ways more hidebound than the straight-forwardly conservative items. The novel as a form seems capable of containing all that can be poured into it; if anything, it's too runny and plastic a form for comfortable reading on an extended scale. Hard-bitten writers control it; mannerism, gigantism, imitation, and fake sentiment are too frequent areas of resort for the others. There's no special evidence of its dying or getting decadent, or suffering any of the other fates so frequently predicted. Perhaps, indeed, the novel displays its true glory when it welcomes any discipline and provides none of its own. At any event, the old motto applies under these circumstances with particular force—All you need for success is ability.

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COMMUNICATIONS

"CAT ON A HOT TIN ROOF"

Dears Sirs,

William Becker's adulation of Tennessee Williams' *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof,* in the Summer, 1955 issue of HUDSON REVIEW is so shocking a refutation of the critical principles by which Becker's previous criticism had been characterized, I can only conclude that he was genuinely thrown off balance by a sympathetic identification beyond the reaches of immediate analysis. In his review this experience was irreconcilable with the limitations of the play apparent to his intelligence. With the permission of the editors, I should like to ask HR's readers to observe the contradictions between Becker's conclusions and his premises, contradictions that result in overstated comparisons and undemonstrable claims.

Consider, first, a sentence in the final paragraph of the Kazan-Williams piece. "If he [Kazan] were not empty of convictions and utterly unscrupulous, if he were more thoughtful and less absolutely intuitive, his conscience would probably destroy him. It is precisely because his imagination is reckless and, to a degree, irresponsible, that he succeeds in creating theatrical effects of a daring and power that no other director on Broadway can begin to approach. . . ." Surely the initial sentence here is not an attack on Kazan, the man, and if not, how is it possible for a director so described to produce the masterpiece credited to him in the earlier paragraphs of this critique? We know there is no necessary connection between character and talent, but an artist's *work* cannot be empty of conviction and emerge from an irresponsible imagination and still be worth so much *excelsior.* Assuming the second sentence to have any general validity, I would still question its exaggerated application in the case at hand. Lights projected onto the cyclorama; an amplified thunderstorm; off-stage darkies singing in the fields, while on-stage characters break bottles in a counsel of desperation: are these "effects of a daring and power" unapproached by any showman from David Belasco to Orson Welles, including every director who staged Eugene O'Neill in the Twenties?

Return, now to par. 1 (p. 268): "the *kind* of theatre produced by [Williams, Kazan and Mielziner] is a strictly American creation and has as yet no European counterpart . . . a curious dialectic of intense realism and rather eloquent fantasy." Good Heavens, might this not be a fair description of *The Great God Brown* or *The Adding Machine,* and were these not derived from Italian and German Expressionism (e.g. Chiarelli and Kaiser) and can't it all be traced back to Strindberg? Further—"talk that develops special rhythms and elevates itself into speech". If this means anything at all, shouldn't it apply to any stage language whatever?

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Par. 3. "There are, in Big Mama, Gooper, Brick's older brother, and Mae, his wife, three brilliant tragi-comic portraits, satirical in quality and devastating in their accuracy." (Though they speak "with unnatural inflections"—see par. 1). I deny categorically that these cliché supporting parts can justifiably be interpreted as "brilliant tragi-comic portraits".

Par. 4. "The method is Tchekovian . . . in the sense that the climaxes are psychological, and the play's rhythms are created not by external events, accidents or gimmicks (like the fire in *Ghosts)* [a gratuitous side-swipe], but by developing relationships between people or by increasing self-awareness in an individual character. As in Tchekov, there are long rambling speeches and lengthy personal reminiscences. . . . Williams' speeches tend, like Tchekov's, to be entirely necessary [*sic*]. . . . The better part of the entire first act of *Cat* is one long monologue by Maggie the Cat addressed to her husband, and only occasionally interrupted by Brick's icy non-committal responses. [Into par. 5] If the dramaturgy is in debt to Ibsen and Tchekov, the general tone and manner owe something to Strindberg." I really don't follow this sequence at all, but I suspect that Williams is receiving a left-handed aggrandizement of his real lack of form by these insecure references to Tchekov. Becker has first compared the *manner* of Williams with that of Tchekov and eliminated Ibsen from serious comparison. Dramaturgically, the ancestry in modern drama of the monologue with a silent or non-committal partner does indeed go back to Strindberg, with his one-act play, *The Stronger.*

Space limits prevent my engaging the central problem of this sequence as I would like. Nowhere in his sketchy analogy does Becker face the awful truth that Tchekov's essential genius is exemplified rather less in his mastery of inconsequential dialogue than in the fact of his characters sharing in *a large consciousness:* they try to relate themselves socially and they ask the profound questions. This, *above all,* distinguishes them from any of Tennessee Williams' characters, in this play especially; the irony (unglimpsed by Williams) of their morose predicaments is that none of them *ever* asks a large question; they only give tawdry answers to a world they've experienced with deficient or perverse sensibilities. Which is why Big Daddy, to whom life appears as a dirty joke, cannot be graced with the epithet (in Becker's par. 3) of "nearly heroic"[1].

Par. 5. "Nonetheless some of the most powerful theatre writing to enliven the drab stages of Broadway in some time." A superlative so qualified as to mean nothing.

Par. 6. "The play dances, thematically, around the problem of Truth, though without saying anything very substantial on the subject." Here, Becker saws off the limb (the hot tin roof-tree?) he is sitting on.

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[1]In extenuation, it may not be presumptuous of me to call to the attention of interested readers—Mr. Becker among them, I hope—a comparative essay on productions of Williams and Tchekov, which I wrote prior to Mr. Becker's published remarks. "The Social Drama from B 108 and A J13" will appear in the Spring 1956 issue of "Southwest Review" (S.M.U. Press, Dallas, Texas).

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Same par. "The resolution of the play is also sexual, though the ostensible subject is still truth . . . as the final curtain falls, Brick and Maggie are going to bed to create that child. *This rather intellectualized and schematized handling of the question,*" etc. Italics, mine! (Incidentally, why does Mr. Williams believe that a child can be created in one willed intercourse, and why have thousands of theatregoers, including Becker, accepted this preposterous biological joke?)

I submit that up to this point in his criticism Becker has failed to give us any concrete illustration, grounded in the play's conception or content, of its generally assumed importance; he has justified not at all his attempt favorably to rate Williams by reference to Tchekov; he has invited us to accept judgments of the acting and of the staging certainly not self-evident when I saw the play and not adequately defined in this article.

Back in par. 7 again—which is where we came in—Becker ratifies my captiousness. "It should be said, in conclusion, that the great weakness of the Williams-Kazan synthetic creation, and particularly of Kazan's part in it, is that much of the artifice tends to be hollow and pasted on. . . . There is, in the method, a certain amount of opportune dishonesty, bamboozling and trickery which is, however, perpetrated with consummate theatrical finesse, and revealed only when recollected in tranquillity."

If Becker insists on Wordsworth for counsel, I'll retain Shakespeare. When Glendower boasted, "I can call spirits from the vasty deep", Hotspur replied:

> "Why, so can I, or so can any man;
> But will they come when you do call for them?"

VERNON YOUNG

Wallingford, Pennsylvania

"AUSTRALIA: A VACUUM FILLED"

The following letter was written in reply to a request from the Editors for a description of the Australian literary scene.

Dear Sirs,

That one can enter a bookshop in Melbourne or one in, say, Rome and find exactly the same stuff points to the incontrovertible fact that the barriers now are nearly all down and banality has free play. Organised resistance is almost a thing of the past and individuals seeking to maintain values have less and less communication with fellow-battlers. Australia, with no real history—even in the sense that Canada and the United States have history—is a vacuum into which pours culture from Britain and the U.S.

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That which arrives from Britain is a pale grey substance manifesting itself in a vaguely *British* accent in the speaking voice and at its point of most vitality in a vague and undefined interest in *The Arts*. American influence ranges far and wide—from films and free copies of literary magazines sent to libraries by the Ford Foundation, to those "American Bars" which seem to pop up all over the world. So that the Australian cultural axis could be said to run approximately from Dylan Thomas and Hemingway to nineteenth century British poets and Beethoven. (Shakespeare of course excepted; and there is cultivation to a limited extent of exotics like Blake and Donne.)

The most important of the official cultural units is the Australian Broadcasting Commission which has its own orchestras and drama programs, but takes a good deal of its material from the B.B.C. Yet only last year the Commission refused, despite a number of requests, to make any special effort towards obtaining the B.B.C. version of Pound's *Women of Trachis*.

This impoverished condition is there for all to see on the pages of Australian literary magazines and papers. The most "reputable"—or perhaps I should just say, the oldest—is the *Bulletin*, a weekly right-wing political paper which prints verse and reviews. The verse generally exhorts wild orchids or some other local flora or fauna to do something or other. . . . But there has been in the past few years a tinge of *nocturnal* verse in which "the dark sap" moves in "twilit veins", etc. The reviews frankly admit the existence of Pound, Eliot, Joyce, but at this late date to sprinkle such names through a column or two of prose does not indicate any special awareness.

The best magazine is, without doubt, *Meanjin*, a well-printed quarterly which appears regularly—but here again most of the verse is thoroughly incompetent when judged against contemporary overseas work, and should have been left unwritten. The prose is too scattered, it never focusses on anything particular, and lacks hold on anything resembling "the live tradition".

It is very doubtful whether those Australian poets who seek to maintain a "local" flavour have justified their efforts in the same way that Frost has justified his in the United States. However, in the case of *Meanjin*, at least, it seems the editor is willing to print good material when he can get it.

Southerly, another well-printed magazine, is a refuge for professors, cultured journalists and members of Parliament. The verse is unbelievably bad, the sort of colourless leaden product which is the trade-mark, all over the world, of so many people who teach English. The prose is wistful and contented—as though the authors and editors were sitting back awaiting some imaginary day of justification when the Georgian poets will be elevated to a deserved position not far below Shakespeare.

Two smaller magazines, irregular in appearance, are *Direction* and *Ern Malley's Journal*, both of which are interested in "contemporary" writing, but seldom seem to find any worthwhile. This extract from *Direction* is an indi-

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cation of the sort of thing being produced by our "leading" writers and published in our literary magazines:

> *All things conspire to hold me from you—*
> *even my love,*
> *since that would mask you and unname you*
> *till merely woman and man we live.*

Twentieth Century is as dull as the dullest of Catholic periodicals—it meanders through the insignificant parts of Belloc and Chesterton and shows great interest in the innocuous portions of the Papal Encyclicals. Lately, however, under Jesuit control, it is preparing for an offensive.

Another "ideological" magazine is *Overland,* mouthpiece for the rough-and-tumble lefty boys, the "realist" writers, the poets who pen songs for union meetings, etc. A recent *Overland* story featured a father talking to his children about strike-funds!

A newcomer—*21st Century*—is at least lively. The editor, in the first issue, proclaims it to be the "best magazine in the world." The second issue should give a clearer idea of where the magazine is really headed.

What hurts an interested Australian is the dreariness and the fact that few show any inclination to make a proper examination of any body of literature whatsoever. It is significant, I think, that Mr. R. H. Mathews, who compiled the *Harvard Chinese Dictionary,* lives unheralded in Melbourne; and especially sad when one thinks of Australia's key position as the largest western nation in the East. (There are occasional stirrings lately, a stray booklet of poems here, an interesting 'phone call there, but nothing yet resembling a *Vortex.)*

This Australian inertia has bearings which stretch far beyond our own shores: it is a direct comment on the quality of the British and American cultures which pour in, and, for the most part, fail to stimulate anybody to any useful or nutritive mental activity.

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Melbourne.

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